A Self-Defeating Strategy:
The United States in Afghanistan, 1946-1960

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DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

There are many people I would like to thank for making this project possible. More than any individual, Dr. Thomas Devine, my professor and friend for the last three years at CSUN, gave this thesis its life. Dr. Devine’s incredibly positive attitude and encouragement of my project, despite the numerous burdens it placed on him, made all the difference. It was a pleasure to be taught by Dr. Devine as both an undergraduate and graduate student. When in doubt, please refer to rule number one and two. Dr. Thomas Maddux and Dr. Donal O’Sullivan provided invaluable insight and helped me understand Cold War tenets. Susan Mueller alleviated any concerns I had about my paperwork vanishing into CSUN’s black hole. The Oviatt Library and Interlibrary Loan office aided me in tracking down my sources, which enabled me to complete this thesis. I would also like to thank the History Department at CSUN and California State University, Northridge.

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ABSTRACT

A SELF-DEFEATING STRATEGY:
THE UNITED STATES IN AFGHANISTAN, 1946-1960

By
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Master of Arts in History

The lack of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan directly after World War Two influenced U.S. policy in the region for decades. This thesis investigates an understudied area of United States foreign affairs by examining how the U.S. undermined its policy towards Afghanistan from 1946-1960. It traces how the United States moved away from establishing relations with Afghanistan and drew closer to Pakistan, and argues that this led Afghanistan to embrace aid from the Soviet Union.

This thesis challenges standard views that Afghanistan was always in the Soviet sphere and that the United States could not create a relationship with the country in three key ways. First, the U.S. refused and ignored requests from Afghani leaders for support, which led Afghani policymakers to explore other options for aid. Second, the United States provided Pakistan with aid and constantly believed Pakistani hyperbole about Afghanistan. By supporting Pakistan and not Afghanistan, the U.S. pushed Afghanistan to accept Soviet succor. Third, the U.S. refused to believe that Afghanistan was a strategic asset in the region yet defended its two neighbors, Iran and Pakistan.
Introduction

Most Americans had little knowledge of Afghanistan until after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The United States’ concern with Afghanistan did not originate on September 12, however. Afghanistan had been a contested spot in the Cold War during the late 1970s and 1980s. Predating the Soviet invasion of 1979, American involvement in Afghanistan extends back to the end of World War II. From 1946-1960, the United States engaged the Soviet Union in an intermittent struggle for influence in Afghanistan. During this time frame Afghanistan never became a Cold War hotspot like Korea or Vietnam. Afghanistan’s geography and location limited its strategic importance to Washington, yet U.S. officials still believed that they had to prevent the Soviet Union from expanding into the barren lands of Afghanistan.

For the most part, scholarship on Afghanistan was focused on the United States or Soviet Union’s policies after the 1979 Soviet invasion. Scholars gloss over the United States’ strategies in Afghanistan prior to 1979 and instead emphasize either America’s relationship with Pakistan and Iran after World War II or the presence of terrorism in the region. An examination of the United States’ strategy in Afghanistan from 1946-1960 reveals important tenets that guided America throughout the Cold War.

Afghani leaders willingly accepted U.S. economic and military aid and welcomed the prospect of joining the Western sphere of influence. Nonetheless, between 1946 and 1960 the U.S. pursued a self-defeating strategy that led Afghanistan to look towards the Soviet Union for assistance and undermined U.S. interests in that nation for years to come. Instead, Washington favored Pakistan and other regional allies while refusing to
take Afghanistan’s views seriously. The United States’ cold war objectives hindered U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.

Washington dismissed Afghanistan as an unimportant backwater that was of no strategic interest to the United States. U.S. policymakers rejected Afghani leaders’ repeated requests for economic and military aid while offering generous assistance packages to its neighbors, Pakistan and Iran. When the U.S. did provide aid and assistance, it came in small amounts doled out in a slow manner. The U.S. wanted to stop the Soviet Union from expanding into Afghanistan but refused to provide the necessary amount of aid to stop the Soviets advance. The United States knew that its policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan had to change, but it would not commit to a new strategy. U.S. officials feared that if they changed their strategy in Afghanistan, Pakistan would become upset and this could undermine the United States’ containment plan.

Meanwhile the Soviet Union continued pouring money into Afghanistan and indulged the demands of Afghani leaders for military equipment and infrastructure projects. The Soviets countered every U.S. move by providing more assistance and drew Afghanistan into their sphere of influence. Pakistan deftly exploited the United States’ fear of communism’s advance and extracted ever-increasing amounts of aid from U.S. officials determined to demonstrate their commitment to fighting the Cold War. Pakistan also exaggerated communist influence within Afghanistan and tried to portray the country as a Soviet satellite. Domestic instability in Pakistan hindered its ability to maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan. Neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan was willing to settle the Pushtunistan issue.
Chapter 1: A Country of Little Importance to the United States

Between 1946 and 1952, the United States attempted to establish a cordial relationship with Afghanistan. During this eight-year period, Washington wanted Afghanistan to remain free from Soviet machinations, maintain friendly relations with its neighbors, and come into the Western sphere of influence. Could the United States succeed and create a Western ally in a hazardous region? Or would the Afghans succumb to Soviet pressure and become a client state of the U.S.S.R?

After World War II ended, Afghanistan asked the United States for economic aid. During the war, Americans had built airfields, roads, and infrastructure in remote parts of the world. The ruler of Afghanistan, King Mohammad Zahir Shah, believed that Washington could help Afghanistan transform itself into a modern country. America had no previous connection to Afghanistan, which appealed to Afghani leaders who were wary of any contact with the Soviet Union and Britain.1 On April 25, 1946, they approached the U.S. legation in Kabul with a request for assistance. The Afghan Director of National Economy wanted a $100,000,000 loan to finance a ten-year program of public works to raise his country’s standard of living. American diplomats rejected the offer due to its poor presentation and strategy. Instead, the U.S. recommended that

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Afghanistan seek proper professional advice and train people in presenting loans in a manner that would assure the best possible reception.²

The Afghan government decided to proceed without U.S. official backing and hired the Morrison-Knudson Company of Boise, Idaho to construct two dams and a series of canals in Southwest Afghanistan. The plan also called for Morrison-Knudson to train Afghan workers in maintenance and supply functions. According to the historian Jeffrey Roberts, this grandiose venture that came to be known as the Helmand Valley Project “hoped to revert the desolate Southwest of Afghanistan into the granary it had been before the Mongol conquest.”³ Shah Mahmud Khan, the nephew of the King and Prime Minister agreed with the pursuit of major public works projects and also believed that Afghanistan should spend some money to update its army. The New York Times reported Khan was “convinced that America’s championship of the small nations guarantee[d] [Afghanistan’s] security against aggression.”⁴ Khan believed that in the future Afghanistan should seek America’s help in acquiring arms.

In March 1948, Secretary of State George C. Marshall forwarded a proposal to President Truman that asked if the U.S. Legation in Kabul, Afghanistan could become an Embassy. American technicians, teachers, and engineers had been assisting the Afghan community for years. The American contingent in Afghanistan dwarfed that of any other foreign nation. “As a member of the United Nations and an increasingly active

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participant in international conferences,” Marshall explained, Afghanistan sought to align itself with Western democracies. The Secretary of State noted that the Soviet Union had an embassy in Kabul, while France planned to make its Legation an embassy. President Truman read over the memorandum and scrawled his approval in the margin. The United States mission at Kabul became an embassy in June 1948.\(^5\)

The Afghani Minister of National Economy Abdul Majid Khan expressed relief that the U.S. had recognized his country. In November, Khan traveled to Washington to plead with U.S. officials to secure a $118-million loan and American arms. India, on whom Afghanistan relied for weapons, was consumed with domestic turmoil and had stopped supplying the Afghans. Khan claimed that “armed tribesmen who of necessity are accustomed to living by their guns” threatened his nation’s fragile government. U.S. arms would improve Afghanistan’s ability to control internal security. Furthermore, Khan stated that Afghans equipped with American weapons could “make a positive contribution in the event there is war with the Soviets…properly armed [Afghans] could manage a delaying action in the passes of the Hindu Kush.”

Representatives of the U.S. State Department responded by stating that America wanted “to see Afghanistan preserve its independence and to make progress towards its goals of social and economic betterment,” but the small nation was clearly not a priority for Washington. In regards to the request for armaments, American officials indicated they would first have to examine Afghan internal security requirements. The U.S. military, not the State Department, would then decide whether conditions were favorable

\(^5\) FRUS, 1948, 5: 490-491.
to ship arms to Afghanistan.\footnote{FRUS, 1948, 5: 491-493.} As one historian has noted, “the Truman Administration was not impressed then. It paid little attention to Afghanistan. Its South Asian specialists were more concerned with India and Pakistan, [while] its Soviet affairs specialists dismissed Afghanistan as small and unimportant.”\footnote{Bradsher, 19.}

The cold reception they received from the Truman Administration did not discourage Afghan leaders from demanding more American armaments a year later. Afghanistan’s First Undersecretary of National Economy insisted that his country urgently needed American weapons. Washington policymakers responded in the same manner, stating “that the U.S. would make a sympathetic study of specific requirements…[and] could not go forward until the Department has received comments from the U.S. Military Attaché at Kabul on the Afghan Defense proposals.”\footnote{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949: The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, Volume VI (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 1777-1778.} A Defense Department analysis summarized America’s view on Afghanistan, claiming that the country was “of little or no strategic importance to the United States…Its geographic location coupled with the realization of Afghan leaders of Soviet capabilities presages Soviet control of the country whenever the international situation so dictates.”\footnote{Bradsher, 20.}

Afghanistan’s rocky relations with its neighbor Pakistan, however, did trouble the Pentagon and State Department. Afghanistan antagonized Pakistan by casting the only negative vote when Pakistan applied for membership in the United Nations in 1947. Afghanistan’s rulers stated that as long as the so-called “Pushtunistan” issue remained
unsolved, Pakistan “should not join the brotherhood of peaceful nations.” By 1950, border disputes between Afghanistan and Pakistan forced the United States to try and ameliorate tensions.

In early 1950, Kabul announced that it wanted to establish an “independent Pushtoon State” in the tribal areas of Pakistan, which angered the Pakistanis. The government of Pakistan responded by stationing troops in the disputed Northwest frontier province and implementing an embargo against Afghanistan. The U.S. director of South Asian affairs worried that Pakistan’s embargo, coupled with troops in the Northwest province, could lead to a war between the two nations. If a war did occur, the Soviet Union could make advances in the region and threaten its stability.

In response, the United States adopted the so-called November 6th approach under which Washington offered to serve as an informal “go-between” in order to assist the two governments in reaching agreements on a series of points. In proposing the November 6th approach, the U.S. recommended that Afghanistan and Pakistan should exchange ambassadors and called on delegates from both nations to cease attacks upon one another and instead use official channels to prevent such attacks. Washington also urged the parties to insure that incidents between tribes did not influence government policy, and to have representatives meet for informal, exploratory discussions about their differences.


Afghanistan and Pakistan both ignored the November 6th approach. Afghanistan continued to call for the creation of a Pashtun homeland and supported anti-Pakistani elements in Pakistan. A spokesmen from the State Department told Afghanistan’s rulers that they must stop their propaganda campaign and not violate Pakistan’s sovereignty. Yet Pakistan engaged in the same kind of campaign within Afghanistan. Seeing that America sympathized with Pakistan, members of Afghanistan’s government told U.S. diplomats that they “might turn to [the] U.S.S.R.” unless America gave them aid.  

Afghanistan’s threat angered Washington policymakers, who saw the country as a potential aggressor against Pakistan “in a more real and immediate danger than any Soviet threat to Afghanistan which might have justified providing United States weapons to Kabul.”

The U.S. refrained from clearly siding with Pakistan or Afghanistan, and instead sent a proposal to both countries’ foreign offices that asked them to work out their problems.

The State Department laid out friendly policy objectives for Afghanistan despite Kabul’s intransigent behavior. The February 1951 memo, “U.S. Policy With Respect to Afghanistan,” asserted that America wanted Afghanistan to remain independent, improve relations with Pakistan and Iran, encourage social, political, and economic progress, and strengthen its “orientation towards western democracies and away from the U.S.S.R.”

The report highlighted the Department of State’s support for Afghanistan’s “ruling

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14 Bradsher, 22.
15 FRUS, 1950, 5: 1455.
oligarchy.” For over twenty years, the autocratic Shah Mahmud had maintained a stable government. State Department officials believed that Shah Mahmud would eventually permit certain freedoms and educate some segments of the population. “Literate elements in the population,” the report said, would encourage “the development of realistic foreign [and domestic] policies which adequately reflect Afghan needs and capabilities.” Once the ruling family had accomplished this, America could then contribute to the government’s stability by providing economic and social support.17

Despite the expressed desire for domestic reforms, U.S. policy centered on Afghanistan’s relations with other states in the region. The United States wanted Afghanistan to reach an accord with Pakistan and settle the contentious border/tribal lands dispute. A State Department memo concluded that U.S. interests “would be seriously prejudiced by the failure of Afghanistan and Pakistan to reach an [agreement].” The Truman administration also encouraged Afghanistan to embrace regional cooperation with Pakistan, hoping that this would extract Afghanistan from the Soviet sphere of influence.18

Officials in the U.S. government strove to prevent Afghanistan from relying on the Soviet Union for support. The Pentagon and State Department believed that Afghanistan had done an excellent job maintaining “an attitude of cautious correctness combined with firm resistance to Soviet efforts at penetration.” U.S. policy dictated that the Afghan government should improve economic conditions and resolve any political troubles. By taking these steps, Afghanistan would prevent outbreaks of dissent that

could lead to Soviet penetration. Despite the Americans’ fear of Soviet intervention, the report did acknowledge that the Soviets had not been actively trying to exert pressure on Afghanistan, an indication that Washington was keeping in perspective the potential Soviet threat in the nation.  

The State Department also wanted Afghanistan to foster cordial relations with its western neighbor Iran. Due to its location between the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf oil fields, Iran was a candidate for U.S. aid under the Perimeter Defense strategy, which called for the increased aid recommended in NSC-68 to be given to countries that were located on the Sino-Soviet borders. Officials in the Defense Department preferred Iran to be surrounded by Western bloc countries. Neutral Afghanistan lay in a position that worried the Pentagon. According to the State Department, in resolving the Afghan/Pakistan dispute, Afghanistan needed to accept help from Iran’s leader, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi. Friendly relations with Iran could also help Afghanistan gain access to “alternative sea route[s].” In the event of war with the Soviets, regional cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan would “greatly assist” U.S. efforts to thwart communist expansion.

The pro-Western Afghan government under Shah Mahmud continued to make overtures to the United States. In April 1951, an Afghani envoy visited Washington, D.C. Before American diplomats met the Afghanis, Secretary of State Dean Acheson

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19 FRUS, 1951, 6: 2009.


21 FRUS, 1951, 6: 2010-2011.
sent a memorandum to President Truman regarding the upcoming meeting. The Secretary stated that Afghanistan had contributed to America’s policy of promoting stable conditions in South Asia, yet failed to resolve the Afghan-Pakistan border dispute. Acheson suggested that President Truman “may wish to indicate the limitations of the ability of the U.S. to furnish military assistance.” Instead, Afghanistan should rely on the United Nations and its members to promote collective security.\(^2\) The Afghani delegation left America without a pledge of support, however, Kabul did make a formal request for arms in August 1951. The U.S. government waited three months to respond and, when it finally gave the Afghans an answer, declared that the $25 million cost would have to be paid in cash, that Afghanistan would need to arrange transit through Pakistan, and that the sale would be made public. As one historian has noted, the “terms were unacceptable; Shah Mahmud called it a ‘political refusal’.”\(^3\)

In October 1951, an Afghan national who had once been a paid informant for the British, assassinated Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan. The assassination poisoned Afghani/Pakistani relations and ended any chances of resolving the border dispute. Some government ministers in Pakistan believed that Afghanistan’s government had something to do with the murder, however, the Pakistanis accepted Afghanistan’s denials. American officials also acceded to Afghanistan’s claims that it had nothing to do with the murder. U.S. diplomats knew that the assassination of Liaquat would harm an already strained relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A month later, with little progress having been made in the negotiations, the State Department decided to

\(^2\) *FRUS, 1951, 6: 1964-1967.*

\(^3\) Bradsher, 20.
withdraw from the November 6th approach.\textsuperscript{24} The United States’ withdrawal led to the deterioration of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At a meeting in New Delhi, India in August 1952, Afghanistan’s ambassador told U.S. diplomats that he felt “disappointed at the limited amount of U.S. economic and technical assistance provided” for Afghanistan. Ambassador Najibullah Khan explained that the Soviet Union and Pakistan threatened Afghanistan’s economic and political life. Proposed oil explorations in Northern Afghanistan angered the Soviets, who supplied Afghanistan with petrol supplies. Meanwhile Pakistan continued to withhold goods and supplies from Afghanistan due to the Pushtunistan issue. Khan wanted the U.S. to facilitate the resumption of negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and act as an “observer” that would render “friendly advice” to Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{25}

Richard S. Leach, a diplomat at the American embassy in New Delhi, explained that the U.S. could not agree to Khan’s terms. “The U.S. is always interested in the peaceful adjustment of differences such as those between the government of Afghanistan and the government of Pakistan,” said Leach, however, America “could not offer an assurance of a renewed interest in the exercise of its good offices.” The State Department showed little interest in jumping back into the Pushtunistan debate. The U.S. government also worried about Afghanistan’s strategic importance and decided that U.S. relations with Pakistan were more important.

\textsuperscript{24} FRUS, 1951, 6: 1994-1997.

From 1946-1952, representatives of the United States government dismissed Afghanistan as an unimportant backwater. The Pentagon and State Department rejected Afghanistan’s leader’s requests for economic and military aid. America imposed unrealistic goals on Afghanistan, such as settling the Pushtunistan crisis, which hampered Afghanistan’s efforts to become a modernized Western nation. The U.S. favored Pakistan and Iran while leaving Afghanistan to fend for itself. Washington’s half-hearted, contradictory policy towards Afghanistan pushed it away from Western countries. By doing this, the U.S. hindered its own policy goals in the region.
Chapter 2: Embracing the Bear

In 1953 the reins of power in Afghanistan passed to the King’s young and impetuous cousin, Mohammed Daoud. A senior U.S. diplomat described Daoud as a “shrewd, powerful dictator with a great ego and a determination to develop his country.” Daoud believed in four policies, that if implemented correctly, would make Afghanistan a legitimate player in international affairs. First, Daoud wanted a rapid economic modernization of Afghanistan. As Ralph H. Magnus states, “modernization, both military and socioeconomic, required foreign aid and advisers, a program for which [Daoud] hoped to gain broad public approval by showcasing the military program as supportive of the legitimate demands for Pushtunistan.” The new Prime Minister also took a tougher line on the Pushtunistan issue and thought Pakistan should make land concessions to Afghanistan. Finally, Daoud believed that he could manipulate both the United States and the U.S.S.R to Afghanistan’s advantage. Prime Minister Daoud’s new approach to Afghanistan’s domestic and foreign policies would present serious challenges to America’s regional goals.

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3 Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Soviet Policy Towards Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence (New York: Praeger, 1982), 128-129.

The Eisenhower administration came into office in the midst of a war in Korea, French difficulties in Indochina, and several other scattered insurrections in Asia. During the campaign, Eisenhower had promised to end the Korean conflict, avoid further U.S. military entanglements, and reduce the defense budget while still maintaining the armed forces. The administration’s defense strategy included massive retaliation from America’s nuclear arsenal and a system of alliances with countries that bordered the Soviet Union and China. According to Jeffrey J. Roberts, “the build up of indigenous forces would cost less and would attract fewer foreign and domestic objections than would the stationing of substantial numbers of Western troops abroad.” Establishing numerous alliances with key regional nations therefore became a cornerstone of Eisenhower’s foreign policy.

Afghanistan’s government supported a collective security arrangement with other nations in the region. In a February 1953 interview with CBS, Afghanistan’s ambassador to the United Nations claimed that his country was “fully committed to the idea of collective security. Afghanistan has always been ready to defend her freedom and independence.” Vice President Richard Nixon, who visited Afghanistan later in the year, believed that “Afghanistan [would] stand up to the communists.” Yet Nixon attacked Afghanistan’s neutrality, vitality, and suitability as an American ally. As one contemporary report noted, Afghani policymakers thought Nixon was “disinterested and mildly antagonistic” toward Afghanistan’s call for an independent Pushtunistan. Nixon implied that neutrality was equivalent to political leprosy. The Vice President’s “what’s

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good for the Untied States is good for Afghanistan” pitch hurt the United States’ reputation in the country.⁶

Despite Nixon’s behavior, the Prime Minister and the King both recommended to him that Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey enter into something similar to “an Atlantic alliance.” A National Intelligence Estimate concluded that Afghanistan “has not opposed U.S. efforts to strengthen the area as a whole” and had expressed interest in receiving military aid. Some Afghan leaders were open to joining a defense pact with other countries if it had U.S. backing and relied on U.S. arms.⁷

By mid-1953 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had become focused on organizing an alliance system in the Middle East and South Asia. Dulles visited Pakistan in May and reported a genuine feeling of friendship.⁸ When Dulles returned to America, he announced that the “strong spiritual faith and martial spirit of Pakistani people would make them a dependable bulwark against communism.”⁹ In a June meeting with the National Security Council, Dulles explained that alliances between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan could help contain the Soviet Union. The United States should create military pacts with each of these countries, which would aid them in shoring up their

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⁷ Roberts, 185.


⁹ Roberts, 149.
defense capabilities. Nonetheless, Afghanistan, geographically wedged between Pakistan and Iran, was ignored and left isolated.

In February 1954, the Eisenhower administration announced it would approve Pakistan’s request for U.S. military supplies. With encouragement from Washington, Pakistan and Turkey shortly thereafter negotiated a treaty for military, economic, and cultural cooperation. Two months later, a high-level U.S. survey team traveled to Pakistan and assessed the requirements of Pakistan’s armed forces. These developments left Afghani officials stunned and angered. Pakistan had managed to outdo Afghanistan and acquire American arms and protection.

Though the U.S. saw Pakistan as a valuable ally in the fight against communist expansion, the State Department continued to relegate Afghanistan to an inferior position in the region. U.S. embassy staffers worried that a U.S.-Afghan military aid program might provoke a hostile Soviet reaction. As one historian has noted, “the Soviet Union appeared capable of taking over Afghanistan at will. As always, no amount of arms shipments could strengthen Afghanistan to the point where it could [resist invasion.]” Furthermore, U.S. diplomats believed that “it would best serve Afghanistan’s interest to receive military assistance at some future date within an established regional convention”

11 Poullada, 183.
14 Roberts, 186.
that the U.S.S.R. would respect. The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs told Secretary of State Dulles that the U.S. had limited funds to devote to Middle East military programs and could not help Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{15}

Aside from the qualms the State Department expressed about Afghanistan, Pakistan influenced America’s strategy by vilifying the Kabul government. Members of Pakistan’s ruling class claimed that Afghanistan’s “reactionary regime” sat atop a powder keg of unrest among minorities, business interests, and the intelligentsia. Pakistan’s government labeled Afghanistan a “socially medieval” place that would soon disintegrate into anarchy. American diplomats all too readily accepted Pakistan’s hyperbole and berated Afghanistan as “a treacherous state out to undermine Pakistan.” Angus Ward, the American ambassador to Afghanistan from 1952 to 1956 and an ardent Pakophile, dismissed Daoud as a communist stooge.\textsuperscript{16} Pakistan’s impression of Afghanistan led American policymakers to exaggerate Afghanistan’s shortcomings while they overlooked or dismissed Pakistan’s problems.\textsuperscript{17}

In October 1954, Prime Minister Daoud sent his brother, Foreign Minister Mohammed Naim, to Washington to request military aid. Naim met with Secretary of State Dulles and asked if America would give Afghanistan much needed armaments. Two months later, Dulles responded that “after careful consideration, extending military aid to Afghanistan would create problems not offset by the strength it would generate.


\textsuperscript{16} Roberts, 192.

\textsuperscript{17} Roberts, 188.
Instead of asking for arms, Afghanistan should settle the Pushtunistan dispute with Pakistan.” In a flagrant breach of diplomatic protocol, Dulles sent a copy of his reply to Pakistan’s government.¹⁸ For his part, Daoud could not idly stand by as Afghanistan’s neighbors, Iran and Pakistan, modernized and reaped American largesse; he soon began to reconsider his options.¹⁹

Meanwhile, U.S.-Afghani relations continued to revolve around the inability of Afghanistan and Pakistan to solve the Pushtunistan dispute. On January 20, 1955, the Afghan Minister to the United Nations told the American U.N. ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. that Afghanistan “could make good use of any American help” regarding the situation in Pushtunistan. Secretary Dulles advised Lodge to stand by America’s ally, Pakistan, and encourage Afghani rulers to foster cooperation between Afghanistan and its southern neighbor. The National Security Council backed Dulles’s decision, and—somewhat contradictorily—also advocated for Afghanistan to resist Soviet enticements. Dulles told Lodge that Afghani requests for economic and military aid would be turned down for the moment.²⁰ The regional network of pacts that Dulles wanted to establish along the Soviet border had not been created. Any attempt at supplying arms to the Afghans would have to wait until alliances were in place.


¹⁹ Roberts, 193-194.

On February 24, Dulles got his wish when Iraq and Turkey formed an alliance. Two months later, Great Britain agreed to join the Iraqi-Turkish pact.\(^{21}\) The agreement between these countries came to be known as the Baghdad Pact.\(^{22}\) An American National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) discussed the benefits of the pact and possibilities for other nations to join. The NIE stated that American and British policymakers should attract members in the region to a “northern tier” defense group. This group could “provide a better geographical basis for realistic defense planning and might serve to deter Soviet aggression.”\(^{23}\)

The Pentagon believed that Afghanistan would not choose to join any “northern tier” defense grouping due to its exposed and isolated position. Members of the U.S intelligence community assumed that Afghanistan’s ruling family preferred to remain uncommitted to neither the Soviet Union nor the West. The NIE report concluded that Afghanistan was consumed with its “persistent quarrel with Pakistan” over Pushtunistan. U.S. officials remained worried that any Afghan tendency to align with other western nations in the Middle East would result in strong Soviet pressures on Kabul.\(^{24}\) Washington also did not want to upset its close ties with Pakistan by establishing friendly relations with Afghanistan.

On June 24, three days after the NIE report came out, an Afghani delegation met with State Department representatives in San Francisco. Prince Sardar Mohammed Naim


\(^{24}\) \textit{FRUS, 1955-1957, 12}: 92.
told Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern Affairs George Allen that Afghanistan’s relationship with Pakistan had deteriorated since the last time they had spoken in October 1954. Prince Naim stated that America’s backing of Pakistan in the Pushtunistan dispute had shocked Afghani leaders.

Instead of lambasting American officials for supporting Pakistan, Naim explained that he wanted to “understand the U.S. government’s attitude toward Afghanistan.” According to Naim, Afghanistan’s long-term interests closely coincided with those of the United States. The greatest overall danger to Afghanistan was not from Pakistan, but from the Soviet Union. Afghanistan wished to have friendly relations with Pakistan, in case of any Soviet incursion into the region. As evidence of Afghanistan’s high regard for the United States, Naim reminded Allen how Afghanistan had asked for military assistance numerous times in the past despite the Soviet Union’s adverse reaction. Yet he noted America refused to provide Afghanistan with any arms, which “left the Afghans in a quandary as to the American government’s attitude towards them.” Allen responded by welcoming Afghanistan’s desire for friendly relations with the United States. The Secretary concurred that Afghanistan and Pakistan had to foster friendly ties and solve the Pushtunistan question.25 Once again, the Department of State gave only vague answers to the Afghani delegations.

On October 11, Iran strengthened the “northern tier” defense group by joining the Baghdad pact.26 American Ambassador to Afghanistan Angus Ward thought that Iran’s decision to join the Baghdad pact would have acute repercussions in Afghanistan. Ward

believed the Soviets would intensify efforts to prevent Afghan alignment with northern tier countries, since Afghanistan remained the only missing link geographically. After a meeting with Foreign Minister Naim, Ward concluded that the Afghans were upset about Iran’s intention to adhere to the Baghdad pact. According to Ward, Naim seemed “totally unmoved by arguments such as increased danger of Soviet threat” and wanted nothing to do with resolving the Pushtunistan dispute. Naim believed that only the U.S. government could arrange a solution to the Pushtunistan issue. The ambassador concluded that the Afghan’s gloomy attitude was unfortunate since it could hinder American diplomacy with the country.27

Increasingly, Daoud began to shift his stance and sought to establish closer relations with the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister manipulated threats from Pakistan to win approval from a loyal council of Afghani leaders in November 1955 for a military aid relationship with the U.S.S.R.28 The loyal council usually resolved political and social conflicts in Afghanistan. Council members and religious leaders wielded an immense amount of power. Daoud had maintained friendly ties with the loyal council; however, by minimizing the council, which viewed communists as atheist stooges, Daoud acquired more power over the central government. Daoud dismissed his defense minister who opposed strengthening ties with the Soviet Union before Communist party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin visited Kabul in December.29

29 Rubinstein, 130.
During his tour of Afghanistan, Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin drove a wedge between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Bulganin announced that the Soviet Union supported Afghanistan’s demands for “an impartial plebiscite” in the Pushtun areas of Pakistan. “We sympathize with Afghanistan’s policy on the Pushtunistan issue,” declared Bulganin. “The Soviet Union stands for a just settlement of the Pushtunistan question, which can be properly solved only if the vital interests of the peoples inhabiting Pushtunistan are taken into account.”

Bulganin’s statement dashed the Western powers’ hopes of luring Afghanistan into a mutual defense agreement. Soviet officials concluded their trip by granting a $100-million, long-term development loan to Afghanistan. Afghan Prime Minister Daoud maintained that Afghanistan was free to look anywhere in the world market to spend the loan. As Louis Dupree states, “in practice, however, all contracts went to the Soviet bloc, mainly because in those countries political considerations were paramount and, therefore, they could underbid Western competitors.” Politically, Afghanistan ended an era of isolation from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union’s moves were a response to Iran joining the Northern Tier alliance.

Ambassador Ward received a letter from Afghan Foreign Minister Naim on the last day of Bulganin and Khrushchev’s visit. In it, Naim replied to the State Department’s warnings that imprudent moves on the part of the government of Afghanistan during the Bulganin visit would have severe repercussions for the U.S.-


Afghan relationship. According to Ward, Naim seemed baffled that the U.S. government should be concerned over the Soviet-Afghan deal. The Foreign Minister protested vigorously against any suggestion that Afghanistan could ever be a Soviet satellite. Afghanistan, he insisted, remained determined to maintain its neutrality. Nonetheless, Naim added that unless the U.S. government stood by Afghanistan, “there is little, if any, hope of preventing this country from being brought into the Soviet sphere.” In a telegram sent on December 21, Ambassador Ward reacted to the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit, declaring that Afghanistan had indeed become a satellite of the U.S.S.R. Due to the “economic enslavement” of Afghanistan, Ward asserted the “Afghans will also be subject to Soviet whims and wishes politically.”

Khrushchev and Bulganin’s policy of wooing Third World nations set off alarm bells in Washington. The White House commissioned a study that called the Soviets’ economic offensive “a well-planned and integrated one—vigorous, selective, and opportunistic”—that was “global in scope.” As the historian Robert J. McMahon has stated, “the United States, according to the report, now faced a grave political and strategic challenge: the Soviets aimed not only to undercut U.S. leadership and influence in the underdeveloped areas but in the process to undermine the Western alliance as well.” The State Department advised U.S. diplomats in Kabul to develop ties between Afghanistan and the Western world. Secretary of State Dulles reiterated that if

Afghanistan and Pakistan resolved the Pushtunistan dispute, the U.S. could help Afghanistan with military and economic aid. American support would pull Afghanistan away from the Soviet sphere and toward the West. Dulles also thought that Washington could continue to be a “helpful bystander” in the crisis. On the other hand, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Horace Hildreth believed the chances for any real settlement of the Pushtunistan issue were “very unpromising at [the] moment.” Despite Hildreth’s pessimistic view, the U.S. persisted in trying to solve the contentious quarrel.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{FRUS, 1955-1957, 8:} 213-216.
Chapter 3: Another Tibet

A January 1956 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) echoed Ambassador Ward’s concerns that Afghanistan was continuing to drift closer to the Soviet bloc. According to the document, Prime Minister Daoud’s “acceptance of extensive Soviet aid is motivated by his desire to strengthen Afghanistan in its controversy with Pakistan over the Pushtunistan issue.” So long as Daoud remained in power, he would continue to seek Soviet assistance. The Pentagon believed that Daoud would use the threat of strengthening Soviet ties as leverage to gain Western economic and military support. Still, U.S. capabilities to induce Afghanistan to change its policies with the Soviet Union remained limited. The Pentagon assumed that if it gave aid to Afghanistan, the Afghans would still ask the Soviets for assistance. Yet if the U.S. did not meet the Afghans’ requests, such neglect would persuade Kabul that “flirtation with the U.S.S.R.” was a necessary action. The U.S. intelligence establishment also worried that if Washington supported Baghdad Pact countries, the Soviets would counter by increasing efforts to “insure Afghanistan’s orientation toward the Bloc.” Neither option would change the fact that Afghan relations with Pakistan remained strained, and neither side seemed ready to make any concessions on the Pushtunistan question.¹

Pakistan exacerbated the spat between the two countries when it demanded that Afghanistan recall its consul in Quetta. The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs insisted that it had “consistently used patience and forbearance against the unfriendly attitude of

the Karachi government.” Afghani policymakers believed that Pakistani diplomats engaged in activities that jeopardized the fragile relationship between the nations. Since Pakistan had asked the Afghani consul to leave, Afghanistan had to adopt corresponding measures and ask the Pakistani government to recall its Military Attaché. This tit for tat behavior would come to characterize relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan to the abiding frustration of American officials.

Three weeks later on January 21, 1956, Czechoslovakia offered Pakistan large-scale economic and technical aid. *New York Times* correspondent Sydney Gruson reported that the Czechs hoped to induce a switch in Pakistan’s pro-Western foreign policy. According to Gruson, Prague wanted Pakistan to drop out of the Baghdad Pact and align itself with Warsaw Pact countries. A Czech Foreign Ministry spokesman claimed that it “was a well known policy of the Czech government not to attach political conditions to trade…this was a major difference between [Prague’s offers and] economic aid given by the United States.” Though the Karachi administration thanked the Czechs for their offer, Pakistan also wished to know how Prague felt about the Afghanistan/Pakistan border situation. The Czechs merely replied that they wanted to sign trade agreements between Pakistan and Czechoslovakia and refrained from mentioning Afghanistan, with whom they also wanted to establish relations.

Pakistan responded the next day by alerting SEATO that Afghan agitation on its border threatened regional peace. In a SEATO meeting in Melbourne Australia, Admiral

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H.M.S. Choudri of the Pakistani delegation expressed alarm at “Moscow’s intervention with promised aid to Afghanistan.” Choudri told members that numerous Afghani planes were violating Pakistani airspace in the tribal areas. Pakistani sources also complained that there had been “communist inspiration in the Pushtunistan [region],” which had resulted in armed attacks on Pakistani outposts. Choudri announced his desire to raise the situation with the Americans when he traveled to the United States.4 Throughout this period, whenever Pakistan felt at all threatened by Afghanistan, India, or any other country, it would claim that communists were behind the agitation and demand U.S. support. In time, such posturing became a tenet of Pakistani foreign policy.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, a Soviet economic delegation began talks with the Afghan government regarding the use of the $100-million loan. The official agreement, signed on January 28, stated that the loan would be repaid in barter goods at a 2 percent interest rate over a thirty-year period in twenty-two installments.5 On January 30, the Soviet Union presented Afghanistan’s King Zahir Shah with an Ilyushin 14 military/commercial cargo plane. The increasing amounts of Soviet aid to Afghanistan, coupled with the Moscow’s support of an independent Pushtunistan continued to irk Washington.6

As the Soviets were presenting King Zahir Shah with his plane, a high-level delegation of British officials traveled to Washington to meet with President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden raised the issue of

the deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan and expressed concern about Soviet interference in the region. Eden declared that Pakistan, as one of the successor states to the British Empire, was entitled to have the same frontier that the British had agreed to when it partitioned India. This meant that the Durand line should continue to be the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Eden warned Eisenhower and Dulles that the Soviet Union had over 5,000 tanks and 4,000 aircraft that it could offer to various countries in order to stir up trouble. Dulles told Eden to refrain from supporting Pakistan’s present frontier with Afghanistan for now.\(^7\) The Secretary of State wanted to bring up the situation in the forthcoming talks with Pakistan in March. Both Dulles and Eden agreed that the present attitude of the Afghani government was “most unfortunate.”\(^8\)

Before the Secretary of State travelled to Pakistan, the United States signed a technical cooperation agreement with Afghanistan in February. Well aware that it had to counter the massive Soviet loan with some kind of economic assistance, Washington agreed to fund education, village, and health development programs.\(^9\) The Soviet Union responded by signing its own technical assistance agreement with Afghanistan on March 1. Afghanistan welcomed the Soviet Union’s promises to build hydroelectric plants, a highway through the Hindu Kush, airfields, motor repair plants, and reservoirs.\(^10\) Based

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7 Dulles was referring to the Durand Line.
on recommendations from Soviet advisors, the Afghans launched their first five-year plan. As one historian wryly remarked, “to be respectable, a developing nation must have a Five Year Plan and a colonial past.” The Soviet funded infrastructure projects could enable Afghanistan to transform itself into a modern nation. Once again, the United States’ half-hearted efforts had forced Afghanistan to ask the Soviets for aid.

Secretary of State Dulles travelled to Karachi in March to meet with Pakistani Prime Minister Chaudhry Mohammed Ali and Governor General Iskander Mirza. Both Mohammed Ali and Mirza told Dulles that they feared the Soviet Union, which had been funneling arms and supplies to the Afghans. Prime Minister Ali asked Dulles for “recognition of the Durand Line as the international boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan.” Dulles claimed that they did not have the time to discuss the Pushtunist situation now, however, the Secretary of State wondered whether Pakistan’s decision to close transit routes that allowed goods to reach Afghanistan had forced the Afghans to “look toward the North.” Ali refrained from commenting. Dulles was correct to assume that Pakistan’s actions forced the Afghans to ask the Soviets for assistance, however, the Secretary of State should have told the Pakistanis more forcefully that their policies were detrimental to Pakistani and U.S. interests.

The day after Dulles’ meeting the SEATO Ministerial Council reaffirmed that the region up to the Durand Line was Pakistani territory. SEATO members deplored how Soviet leaders promoted tension and unrest along the Pakistani/Afghani border. The Council insisted that Communist agitators had to stop their attempts at political and

11 Dupree, Afghanistan, 509.
12 FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 221.
economic infiltration. The SEATO powers warned the Soviets that inciting conflict along Pakistan’s border would elicit a full response by the group.

SEATO’s claims were dubious at best. Afghani leaders had accepted Soviet aid but refrained from letting the communists operate in their country. The Soviet Union was not paying “communist agitators” to stir up trouble between Pakistan and Afghanistan. SEATO’s belief that the Soviets had a hand in everything stemmed from the United States’ view, which suggested that the Soviet Union was a expansionist power that sought to conquer the world. By exaggerating the communist threat, Pakistan could acquire more defensive aid from the United States and SEATO.

On March 7, Dulles met with Prime Minister Ali in order to discuss the Afghan situation. Dulles started off the meeting by saying that “he did not like to concede that Afghanistan was bound to become a Soviet satellite and that his colleagues in Pakistan took this too much for granted.” Prime Minister Ali replied that Afghani Prime Minister Daoud had caused the deteriorating relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ali believed that the Soviet Union and India played on Daoud’s ambitions. Ali then showed Dulles maps that indicated how the projected state of Pushtunistan would embrace the entire northern and western areas of Pakistan. Pakistani leaders stated that the “Afghans wish to unsettle an area which by and large [is] a settled and stable one.” According to Ali, there had been eight years of tranquility in Afghanistan until Daoud became Prime Minister. The majority of Afghans hated communism, the Soviets, and Daoud.

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Attempting to drive a wedge between the Afghan people and their government, Ali told Dulles that Afghans “pray for Pakistan in their mosques…thousands come from Afghanistan to Pakistan every winter. All the present trouble has been caused by the mad desire of Afghanistan’s rulers.”¹⁵

The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs George Allen countered by asking Ali why, if the Pushtunistan problem was a century old, the removal of Daoud was the key to its solution. In response, Ali claimed that important Afghans including Daoud’s uncles were unhappy with the Prime Minister’s mercurial behavior. Ali quoted the former Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan, Rafiq Attik, who had remarked that Afghans were “foolish people and shall commit suicide.” Secretary of Dulles demanded that the Pakistanis explain where they thought power rested in Afghanistan. Ali claimed that the Army ruled by using fear. Daoud did not have direct control over the army and did not use it as his personal protection detail. Any Afghan who criticized his government risked being thrown into prison. Having heard enough from Ali, Dulles asked what the U.S. could do, since “the policy of Pakistan would probably make certain that a bad result would ensue.”

Prime Minister Ali replied by giving an eight-year history of the Pak-Afghan relationship. Throughout this entire time, the Pakistani government had been extremely patient with the Afghans despite criticism from within Pakistan. Still, the Afghan government never ceased in its “vicious propaganda” campaign and continued to hamper Pakistan’s efforts at reconciliation. Ali claimed that something had to be done quickly before Daoud gained more power. Dulles wanted to know what options were available.

¹⁵ *FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 221-222.*
Ali said that the U.S. had to recognize the Durand Line and come to the aid of Pakistan in case it was attacked. Allen reminded Prime Minister Ali that the arms available to the Afghans from the Soviets “were not comparable to the assistance given by the U.S. to Pakistan, and that the Russians seemed primarily to be working on an economic program in Afghanistan.” Dulles agreed with Allen’s point and told Prime Minister Ali that Pakistan did not have “a constructive program” for handling the Afghan problem.

The Prime Minister responded by saying that there had always been the fullest exchange of thoughts within Pakistan’s government about its relationship with Afghanistan. Ali wanted the U.S. to tell Afghanistan that it should either join the West or the Soviets. “Nothing would please the Pakistanis more,” said Ali, “than to have the Afghans opt for the Free World, through a decision to join the Baghdad Pact, and to follow the democracies in other ways, [however], it was unfortunate that the present regime prevented the Afghans from expressing their true pro-Western feelings.” Dulles emphasized that the U.S. and Pakistan could not quit and let Afghanistan fall to the Soviets. According to Dulles, making U.S. resources available to Afghanistan might prevent the Soviets from absorbing it. The Secretary concluded the interview with “an expression of hope” that a solution could be found to the situation. Dulles had stood his ground and refrained from giving in to Pakistan’s demands. The Secretary of State correctly assumed that Pakistan would claim it was threatened so that it could get more arms, when in fact Afghanistan was no threat to Pakistan. The Pakistanis were more worried about India and figured that if they claimed that Afghanistan (or communists)

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threatened them, the U.S. would give it a blank check for military aid. Dulles’ discussion was a step in the right direction for U.S. policymakers.

Two days later on March 9, Dulles met again with Governor General Mirza to discuss Afghanistan. The Secretary changed his stance from the previous meeting and said that it should be up to Pakistan to come up with specific plans that could achieve desirable results. By giving Pakistan the power to draw up plans, Dulles curtailed America’s ability to achieve any kind of progress in settling the Pushtunistan dispute. The Secretary of State was allowing Pakistan to continue its self-defeating policies, which hurt Pakistani-Afghani and U.S.-Afghani relations. Dulles viewed Pakistan as a more important ally in the fight against communism and knew that he could not isolate it. The U.S. remained mired in the same position it was in before the meetings.

Later that day, the Afghan Foreign Ministry issued a statement regarding SEATO’s decision to recognize the Durand Line. Afghani officials felt “compelled to declare once again that no gathering and no political alliance is competent to decide the fate of a people contrary to the wishes and aspirations of the people themselves.” The Afghan government stated that it would continue to support the rights and claims of the Pushtunistani people. Afghani policymakers concluded by dismissing the SEATO decision as worthless.17

The State Department remained worried that continued Soviet economic aid to Afghanistan would transform the country into a satellite. Under Secretary of State Herbert C. Hoover told American diplomats in Kabul that the Soviets $100 million loan

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to Afghanistan would result in Soviet domination of the economy. Hoover suggested that the United States increase its economic development program to counter the massive Soviet aid package. Before the United States gave Afghanistan any assistance, however, Hoover recognized that U.S. diplomats had to discuss the situation with Pakistani leaders. Pakistan resented any aid that Afghanistan received and would be angry if the U.S. provided a large amount. The United States had to tread carefully lest it anger Pakistan’s new leaders.\footnote{FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 228-229.}

Former Governor General Mirza of Pakistan became the first President of Pakistan on March 23, 1956. Shortly after taking office, Mirza issued a statement to the National Assembly regarding Pakistan’s relations with Afghanistan:

As for Afghanistan, we have nothing but the friendliest feelings for the people of that country. They are our brothers-in-faith. It grieves us to find that any ill will or misunderstanding should be created between them and ourselves. We are profoundly interested in their welfare and progress. We shall, therefore, always be prepared to discuss and cooperate with the Afghan Government in all matters of mutual interest. We are not, however, prepared and never will be, to admit the right of Afghanistan, or of any other country for that matter, to interfere in our domestic affairs. There is no question but that the Durand Line constitutes the international frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan…we trust that wiser counsels will prevail and the rulers of Afghanistan will seize the hand of friendship and cooperation that we extend to them.\footnote{The National Assembly of Pakistan Parliamentary Debates (Karachi: Government of Pakistan, 1956), 5-6.}

Other members of Pakistan’s government supported President Mirza’s statements regarding Afghanistan. Pakistan’s Central Minister for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Relations Hamidul Huq Choudhry believed that Afghanistan’s
“preposterous case” of trying to lay claim to Pakistan territory hampered any chances of improving ties. Choundhry firmly declared that Afghanistan had to respect Pakistan’s sovereignty and recognize the Durand Line. If Afghanistan did this, the Pakistani government would ensure safe passage of Afghani trade and commerce through Pakistani territory, which would help develop close economic and cultural ties between the two countries.  

For its part, Washington continued its effort to create a robust economic relationship with Afghanistan but faced stiff competition from the U.S.S.R. and other Eastern bloc nations. The United States International Cooperation Administration gave a $997,000 grant to Columbia University’s Teachers College in order to create English language programs and set up Afghan secondary schools. The Soviet Union responded by presenting Kabul with fifteen buses and equipment for a 100-bed hospital. Soviet satellite countries such as Czechoslovakia also courted Afghan officials. From April 4-18, an Afghan military mission visited Prague and discussed a potential arms sale to Afghanistan. The Soviet Union and its satellites showed the United States that they could beat any U.S. aid package to Afghanistan and win the backing of Afghani leaders. U.S.-Afghan diplomacy also remained rocky. On April 2, Afghani Ambassador to the United States Mohammad Kabir Ludin met with State Department officials in Washington. George Allen told Ludin that Bulganin’s support of Pushtunistan forced the

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20 The National Assembly of Pakistan Parliamentary Debates, 96-97.


22 Adamec, 270.

U.S. and SEATO to back Pakistan.\textsuperscript{24} The two men proceeded to discuss the legal aspects of the question of sovereignty over the disputed area. Allen explained to Ludin that Britain had “previously exercised authority over the area, and it appeared…that Britain had intended to convey its ‘ownership’ of Pushtunistan to Pakistan.” Ludin lamented the situation in Afghanistan and remarked that he was losing sleep over it. The Ambassador hoped that the U.S. would do something to resolve the dispute.\textsuperscript{25}

Back in South Asia, neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan seemed ready to make any progress in ameliorating their differences. Minister Choudhry went so far as to assert that Pakistan “had no dispute with Afghanistan. The Durand Line is an international frontier.”\textsuperscript{26} Choudhry’s arrogant remark angered Afghani leaders, who responded in kind. The Afghan embassy in New Delhi asserted that “Pakistani authorities and agents of the Karachi government” slaughtered their own people when they tried to leave the country.\textsuperscript{27} The heated exchanges exacerbated the tense situation and hampered any chance of reconciliation.

Within this context, the National Security Council met on May 17 to discuss significant developments affecting U.S. security. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Allen Dulles started off the discussion on Afghanistan by mentioning how the Soviets continued to make inroads. Dulles reported that the Soviets had already launched more than thirteen projects in Afghanistan. In addition, truckloads of small arms were

\textsuperscript{24} Bulganin’s statement occurred during the Bulganin-Khrushchev visit to Kabul in December 1955.

\textsuperscript{25} FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 230-231.


\textsuperscript{27} Ali, 254.
entering Afghanistan along the porous border with the Soviet Union. Dulles believed that “as long as Afghanistan was cut off from the West by its feud with Pakistan, Afghanistan would turn more and more to the U.S.S.R.” The CIA director hoped that Pakistani President Mirza’s upcoming visit to Kabul would result in a settlement of hostilities. Dulles also recommended that the United States try at least to maintain a strategic air foothold in Afghanistan. If the U.S. had military airbases in Afghanistan, it could strike deep inside the Soviet Union and protect Western interests in the region.

After the CIA director finished his brief, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Anderson told the NSC that there were severe limitations on the capability of the United States to counter Soviet maneuvers in Afghanistan. When President Eisenhower asked if anyone had anything to say on the subject, Secretary of State Dulles warned that the U.S. could not undertake an economic program that would match in size that of the Soviet Union, however, this did not prevent Washington from providing economic developmental assistance. Director of the Office of Budget and Management Percival Brundage asked if it was possible to revise the U.S. fiscal commitment to Afghanistan for the years 1958-59. The skeptical Brundage wondered “if it was wise to make commitments of this size ($12 million) for a period so far ahead.” President Eisenhower and Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson agreed. Wilson added that “the United States could really do nothing for Afghanistan until the latter’s quarrel with Pakistan had finally been settled.”

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In particular, the longstanding nature of the dispute drew the attention of U.S. officials. In response to Secretary Wilson, an exasperated Secretary of State Dulles noted that the sniping between Afghanistan and Pakistan had been going for hundreds of years. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Arthur Radford interjected that the fighting had actually been going on for thousands of years. Dulles felt that it would be a waste of time to wait for a settlement of the feud. Instead, the U.S. should try to do something to save Afghanistan. The Secretary of State and the Director of the International Cooperation Administration John Hollister discussed having Pan American Airlines fly in to Afghanistan. A project like this, they claimed, would provide “immediately visible evidence of continued U.S. friendship for Afghanistan.” Hollister suggested that if Pan American Airlines would not fly in and out of Afghanistan, the U.S. should back Dutch KLM Airways in its efforts to fly out of Afghanistan. Members of the council agreed that “it might be better for an ally of the United States, rather than the United States itself, to attempt to secure an air foothold in Afghanistan.” President Eisenhower and Dulles supported Hollister’s suggestion. Admiral Radford disagreed and said that the “free world” had only a fifty-fifty chance of preventing Afghanistan from falling into the Soviet orbit.\footnote{FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 235.}

Secretary of State Dulles ignored Radford’s comment and discussed instead his recent visit to Karachi. Dulles believed that there were two divergent lines of thinking among the Pakistanis. The first group thought that the situation in Afghanistan could be improved by peaceful means. The second group, which included President Mirza, thought that only a coup would clear up the situation. After Mirza met with Afghani
Prime Minister Daoud in Kabul, Dulles expected the Pakistani president to seek U.S. assistance. Special Assistant to the President Harold Stassen asked the group if a program could be worked out between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan if “the latter were to be saved from the U.S.S.R.” Admiral Radford mentioned how he had broached the situation with the Shah of Iran on his recent visit to the Middle East. Unfortunately, the Shah claimed that Iran’s relations with Afghanistan were not very close, which led Radford to express grave doubts about the efficacy of increased U.S. economic assistance to Afghanistan.

President Eisenhower responded by discussing the merits of nationalism. According to Eisenhower, “if there was one sentiment universally abroad in the world today, it was the sentiment of nationalism.” The President thought that the United States had to stress the significance of nationalism and make clear to the Afghanis that they would lose their national identity if they continued to accept large amounts of Soviet aid. Eisenhower maintained that if Afghanistan failed to act quickly, it would become “another Tibet.” The President saw nationalism and the Muslim religion as the only real influences in Afghanistan that could redound to the benefit of the United States. Eisenhower agreed with Dulles and thought that the United States could not compete with the Soviet Union’s economic plans in Afghanistan. Secretary of Defense Wilson concurred with Eisenhower’s points, but said that if Afghanistan could not get along with its neighbors, it would not get along with the United States. The inability of U.S. leaders to decide whether Afghanistan warranted U.S. aid and protection hampered America’s policy in the country.

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31 FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 236.
Six days after the National Security Council meeting, Sheldon Mills, the new U.S. Ambassador in Afghanistan, reaffirmed America’s commitment to uphold the Durand Line. Afghani leaders kept bringing up the Pushtunistan issue in meetings with Mills, thereby forcing the ambassador to reaffirm that “the United States must accept both Pakistan and India as successor states of British India.” Despite Mills’ declaration to uphold the Durand Line and commitment to support Pakistan, the ambassador warned State Department officials not to give the impression that the American embassy in Afghanistan was an extension of Pakistan’s consulate. The shrewd ambassador knew that if America tied itself to Pakistan’s goals, it would hamper U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. Mills’ suggestion was a brief moment of clarity for U.S. policymakers who were constantly swayed by Pakistani rhetoric.\(^{32}\) Pakistani policymakers focused on increasing their nations armaments and defending against an Indian attack. The United States had repeatedly given in to Pakistani demands for more weapons, which angered the Afghans and India. Mills knew that unlike the United States, Pakistan did not want peace in the region: it wanted to be the most powerful country.

Pakistan’s worries about communist gains in Afghanistan and in the region brought Vice President Richard Nixon to the country in July 1956. During the past few months, Pakistan had been worrying about America’s decision to aid neutral countries in the area, specifically Afghanistan and India. Nixon sought to assuage any fears that Mirza had about America’s commitments to Pakistan and claimed that there would be no

policy change. After Nixon departed, Mirza “assured his countrymen that the U.S. would not court neutral at the expense of friends and would not take its allies for granted.” Vice President Nixon neglected to visit Afghanistan during his tour of Southern Asia, which probably led Afgani policymakers to conclude that the United States was only courting Pakistan.

While Nixon listened to Pakistan’s worries, the Soviet Union agreed to give Afghanistan a $32 million loan for the purchase of Soviet weapons. One month later in August, Afghanistan received $25 million in arms from the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. The arms package included T-34 tanks, M.I.G. 17 fighter planes, Ilyushin-28 jet bombers, helicopters, and small arms. Afghanistan had finally secured the military supplies that it had sought since the late 1940s. By constantly overlooking Afghanistan and failing to provide timely economic and military assistance, the United States opened the door for more Soviet succor to pour into the country.

Afghanistan’s economic dependence on the U.S.S.R. continued to worry C.I.A. Director Dulles. Dulles believed that within the next few years the Soviet Union would be able to influence political as well as economic policies in Afghanistan. “The basic cause of closer Afghan-Soviet relations,” said Dulles, “is Afghan Prime Minister Daoud’s

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36 Dupree, 522.
[sic] conviction that only from the U.S.S.R. can he obtain large-scale economic assistance required for the rapid modernization of his country and the political and military support to make his dream of Pushtoonistan [sic] a reality.” The Central Intelligence Agency director thought that Daoud appeared to be in a position of strength when it came to bargaining with Pakistan, and the infusion of Soviet arms and supplies further reinforced Daoud’s grip on power in Afghanistan. Even though Daoud leaned towards the Soviets, the Afghani Prime Minister still maintained contact with the West. Dulles believed that Daoud could “continue to be susceptible to Western proposals which would give him some protection against an eventual Soviet takeover. However, the overall trend of Afghan policy at present” was to remain close to the Soviet Union. Dulles explained that the Pakistanis, Iranians, and Turks all thought it was impossible to do business with Daoud.37 Dulles noted that the Pakistani President would be visiting Kabul under these unfavorable conditions.

On August 31, the State Department noted that the August 7-11 visit of President Mirza to Afghanistan had resulted in an “improved atmosphere” between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ambassador Mills suggested that the Department of State send a team to Karachi and Kabul to find out how relations could be improved. Specifically, Mills wanted to propose a joint transit project between both countries. “I wish to reiterate,” said Mills, “that now is [the] time to act and that undue delay may result in letting slip this opportunity to nail down by positive action good feeling engineered by [this] visit.” Department officials thought that the U.S. ambassadors in each country should convey to both governments U.S. congratulations for the successful outcome of the recent meeting.

The State Department hoped that the meeting would precipitate further efforts to reconcile the countries’ differences.\(^\text{38}\)

Ambassador Mills informed Daoud that the U.S. looked forward to helping his country in the future and that his visit to Pakistan provided an opportunity for him to develop relations with Karachi. For his part, Daoud “expressed his great appreciation for U.S. efforts to improve Afghan-Pakistani relations.” Mills felt that Daoud was inclined to assent to the U.S. offer of a joint transit project. Ambassador Hildreth also contacted Pakistani officials and expressed his desire to see them agree to the transit project.

Pakistan’s policymakers were sympathetic to U.S. objectives, yet could not accept any proposal that would involve any surrender of its sovereignty.\(^\text{39}\)

Before Daoud went to Karachi, the first installments of arms from the Soviet Union arrived in Kabul on September 27. Afghanistan’s debt to the Communist bloc now totaled over $150 million, and Czechoslovakia announced that it had “opened a depot in Kabul for facilitating the sale of industrial products and arms to Afghanistan.” Kabul radio declared that the government planned to reorganize the Afghan National Defense Department. Foreign tourists in Afghanistan noticed that “the shops in Kabul are now full of Russian and Czechoslovak goods, which are sold at subsidized prices.” The Soviet Union was solidifying its grip on its southern neighbor.\(^\text{40}\)

Ambassador Hildreth reported that Daoud’s visit to Karachi produced no results. Secretary of State Dulles lamented Daoud’s insistence on speaking about nothing.

\(^{38}\) *FRUS, 1955-1957, 8*: 243-244.

\(^{39}\) *FRUS, 1955-1957, 8*: 245.

\(^{40}\) “Soviet Arms For Afghanistan: First Supplies Reach Kabul,” *The Times*, September 27, 1956, 9.
but the Pushtunistan issue and the Afghans’ refusal to broach the transit project. Dulles now advised that the U.S. concentrate on convincing Daoud that Afghanistan should embrace Pakistan’s desire for amiable relations. However, Dulles noted that Pakistan was losing interest in developing closer ties to Afghanistan. Indeed, Pakistani policymakers including Mirza and Ayub criticized the United States’ aid strategy in Afghanistan.41

During 1956, the Untied States achieved none of the policy goals it had laid out for Afghanistan a year earlier. The Pushtunistan dispute remained unresolved as both sides refused to negotiate. Afghan relations with Pakistan continued to deteriorate at an alarming pace, while the Soviet Union gained influence in Afghanistan itself. The United States worried about the Soviet Union’s gains in Afghanistan yet did little to combat them. American policymakers admitted that they could not match the Soviet Union’s economic aid packages but still complained and worried. U.S. officials had brief moments of clarity regarding shortcomings of their policy, however, they failed to change the direction of the strategy.

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Chapter 4: More of Nothing

On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower delivered a special message to Congress on the situation in the Middle East. The Eisenhower Doctrine, as the policy articulated in the speech came to be known, stated that the United States would provide any country in the Middle East with military or economic assistance if it came under threat from any state. Eisenhower singled out the Soviet Union by asserting that the United States would “defend the territorial integrity and the political independence of any nation in the area against Communist armed aggression.” The President believed that “Russia’s interest in the Middle East [was] solely that of power politics.” Eisenhower listed numerous American declarations that protected the political independence of Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. There was no mention of Afghanistan.  

Three days later in Afghanistan, the Soviet news agency Tass reported that the U.S.S.R. and Afghanistan had signed another trade protocol that would further increase trade between the nations. The Soviet Union would provide Kabul with cars, oil products, and metal exports, while Afghanistan gave Moscow wool, rawhides, and dried fruit. As the United States waffled in its policy towards Afghanistan and focused on other regional allies, the Soviet Union continued to slowly pull Afghanistan into its sphere of influence through its aid program.

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During his state of the union address on January 24, President Eisenhower stated that the United States had to protect the free world by promoting closer economic ties with other nations and its allies. “Strength is essentially a product of economic health and social well-being,” said Eisenhower, “consequently, even as we continue our programs of military assistance, we must emphasize aid to our friends in building more productive economies and in better satisfying the natural demands of their people for progress.”

To counter the Soviet threat, Eisenhower asked for a substantial increase in foreign assistance, arguing that it was vital to America’s national security. The United States clearly wanted to shower aid on its allies and outbid the Soviets in certain neutral countries.

A New York Times article urged the United States to give more assistance to Afghanistan in order to stop communism’s advance in the country. Afghanistan, The Times observed, was once a prosperous land, but now “disease, desert, destitution, and dilapidation spread” throughout the countryside. According to C.L. Sulzberger, “Afghanistan [was] a medieval nation struggling to crawl into the atomic age.” The ruling clan in Afghanistan had been able to protect its border and Islam by holding off the Soviets’ atheist system, however, the nation needed more foreign aid from the West. “This is a subtle game,” said Sulzberger, “Communist magnetism endeavors to attract this landlocked nation ever more closely northward. We [the United States] seek to open up new links between Afghanistan and the sea-lanes of freedom.”

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effort to orient Afghanistan toward the West would need the backing of Pakistan, which had proved incapable of following any of the United States’ suggestions.⁵

Pakistani Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy exacerbated tensions with Afghanistan during his speech to the Pakistani National Assembly on February 22. Suhrawardy claimed that Pakistan had “extended the hand of friendship and co-operation” to Afghanistan numerous times. Instead of embracing their Muslim brothers, the Afghans’ voted against Pakistan’s admission to the United Nations and adopted an unfriendly attitude towards Pakistan.⁶ Suhrawardy’s address echoed previous statements by other Pakistani officials regarding Afghanistan. Pakistan’s leaders insisted that it was only Afghanistan’s intransigence that had led to poor relations. By refusing to admit that their policies towards Afghanistan were flawed, Pakistan continued to adopt strategies that inflamed tensions.

Meanwhile, the Afghani government welcomed Eisenhower’s messages and expressed its desire to strengthen ties with the free world, particularly Pakistan. Under Secretary of State Christian Herter reported that Afghani leaders showed “great interest” in the Eisenhower Doctrine. Members of Afghanistan’s ruling class were also eager to settle the Pushtunistan dispute and work on transit projects that would link Afghanistan and Pakistan. Herter thought it was unlikely that the Afghans would abandon the Soviet Union’s assistance, yet the Under Secretary of State thought that Afghanistan’s “new look” policy represented a genuine desire to strengthen its ties with the Western world.

Herter advised Ambassador Hildreth to inform the Pakistanis of Afghanistan’s position. Afghanistan’s “new look” presented the United States with an opportunity to make inroads in that nation, counter the Soviet threat, and improve Afghani/Pakistani relations. America now had to convince the obstinate Pakistanis’ that cultivating a better relationship with Afghanistan was in their interest.

Secretary of State Dulles met with Pakistan’s Finance Minister Amjad Ali in Canberra, Australia on March 11. Ali told Dulles that the government of Pakistan (GOP) was “quite concerned with the situation in Afghanistan. The GOP had information that Soviet agents were active among the tribes in the Frontier, including those on the Pakistan side.” After listening to Ali’s polemic speech, Dulles informed the minister that U.S. intelligence indicated that the government of Afghanistan was not pro-communist. “As a matter of fact,” said Dulles, “they (Afghanistan) appeared to be most interested in the President’s Middle East Plan and may ask us for assurances under the Plan.” Dulles then said that the United States was not certain that it could give any of those assurances; “this would be stretching the Middle East very far.” Ali echoed Prime Minister Suhrawardy’s speech, maintaining that Pakistan had tried everything to improve its relations with Afghanistan. The GOP did not want to make any concessions because it might lead the Afghans to believe that Pakistan was weakening. Dulles again seemed to be coddling the Pakistanis. The Secretary of State knew that the Pakistanis’ were exaggerating their claims about Afghanistan being pro-communist, yet he stopped short of saying that the United States would help the Afghans anyway. Dulles might have

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been treading carefully so as not to anger the Pakistanis, who detested any U.S. aid to Afghanistan. The Secretary of State’s refusal to acknowledge that the U.S. might help Afghanistan in the future soothed Pakistani concerns, however, it also enabled them to continue to denigrate Afghanistan. Unduly focused on soothing the Pakistanis, Dulles hampered America’s ability to influence relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Pakistanis aired the same worries when Ambassador Hildreth met with President Mirza and Prime Minister Suhrawardy four days later. Mirza and Suhrawardy countered American assertions that Afghanistan was showing increased interest in strengthening its ties with the free world; “on the contrary, they stressed, Soviet influence in Afghanistan was increasing dangerously.” Hildreth reported to the State Department that Pakistan wanted to provide some kind of counter weight to Soviet influence. Hildreth stated that the “GOP would gladly cooperate with any pressures or moves to wean Afghans toward Pakistan and [the] free world.” Up until this point, the Pakistanis had been anything but cooperative with Afghanistan or the United States. Pakistan did not want Afghanistan to be free and independent, it wanted a neighbor that was totally dependent upon it. Pakistan could then use Afghanistan’s resources against the Soviet Union or its archenemy, India.9

Back in Washington, American policymakers were having a tough time deciding whether they should include Afghanistan in Eisenhower’s Doctrine. According to Herter, if the United States excluded Afghanistan from the program it might imply that the U.S. would not oppose a Soviet take over. Yet the United States strove to avoid any actions that the Soviet Union could consider provocative. Herter stated that the U.S. was aware

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of the Afghan officials’ outspoken endorsement of the doctrine, however, if the U.S. excluded the Soviet Union it could create “real hardships” for the Afghani people. Herter concluded the message by telling Ambassador James P. Richards that he needed to be very precise when defining the doctrine to the Afghans.⁴⁰ “We face [a] delicate problem of keeping Afghan expectations within bounds,” said Herter, “while at the same time maintaining Afghan confidence [for] closer relations with U.S.” The U.S. continued its policy of stonewalling the Afghans and forcing them to look northwards. It seemed that Washington was more concerned with the Soviet Union’s reaction than the Afghans’.

Ambassador Richards’ tour of South Asia brought him to Pakistan for five days in late March. Richards believed that Pakistan would be willing to defend the Middle East from Communist subversion, however, it had to overcome serious obstacles. The continuing difficulties with India posed the biggest threat to Pakistan. The Ambassador noted that few prospects for improvement appeared to exist. When Richards asked the Governor of West Pakistan about Pakistan’s defense needs, the governor replied that “when Pakistanis speak of defense they speak of defense against India.” Pakistan stressed the “evils of neutralism” and tried to get the United States to join the Baghdad Pact. Richards also noted that Pakistan had “staggering” economic difficulties that had been lowering living standards in the country. Despite Pakistan’s problems, Richards thought that the nation’s rulers were on the right track. According to Richards, The

⁴⁰ Ambassador Richards was a special assistant to the President who went on a 57-day mission around the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa to explain President Eisenhower’s doctrine.
“Pakistanis,” he concluded, “went quite far in offering to try to reach understanding with Afghanistan.”11

Richards’ report presented a clear picture of what drove Pakistan to pursue its policies. Pakistan’s greatest fear was that its eastern neighbor India would attack it. Pakistan constantly demanded that the United States provide it with “defensive” weapons to thwart an Indian attack. India and Afghanistan’s neutral stance on foreign policy angered Pakistani policymakers as did the Soviet Union’s support for both countries’ border disputes with Pakistan. By exaggerating the threat from India and communism, the Pakistanis played on America’s fears of a global communist movement and forced the United States to give them an endless supply of weapons and aid. Even though Richards acknowledged the severe problems that plagued Pakistan, he, like other U.S. policymakers, tended to romanticize the Pakistanis as a people who would fix their domestic issues while still remaining a bulwark against communism.

After his visit to Pakistan, Richards toured Afghanistan and wrote a detailed report about the country. He saw the Afghans as “proud, suspicious mountain people.” Afghanistan was a totalitarian type state run by a small oligarchy. Richards believed that the ruling family would fiercely defend its country’s independence from any threat including international communism. Afghani leaders recognized the “present dependence on U.S.S.R. and Soviet capability [to] retaliate effectively by economic measures if not by armed force. They desire to loose [the] embrace of Russian bear but know they must move slowly to avoid being crushed.” According to Richards, the United States should encourage the emergence of a “neutral” Afghanistan based on the

Swiss model. In so doing, America could slowly help Afghanistan extract itself from the Russian fold. Richards recommended that the United States should avoid “arousing on [the] part of [the] Afghans expectations of support which in actual crisis it would not be practical for United States to extend.” If the U.S. did include Afghanistan in the Eisenhower Doctrine, it would enhance U.S. prestige but put the U.S. in a difficult situation if a crisis arouse and the Afghans demanded aid. An American refusal to grant support would be “a severe blow to America’s prestige.” Richards concluded that the State Department should give a clear-cut answer to Afghanistan and include it under the Middle East proposals.12

Richards’ report represented a sharp break from United States policy towards Afghanistan. Although he echoed some of the same concerns that U.S. officials had previously voiced, he believed that it would be better for the United States to include Afghanistan in its Middle East Policy. Even though he and other U.S. policymakers pandered to Pakistan, Richards knew that a quick and positive response would help America’s struggle to contain the Soviet Union even if Afghanistan did become a neutral country like Switzerland. The United States had to act fast in order to please the Afghans.

Before the Eisenhower administration could make a decision on Richards’ report, the U.S. embassy in Karachi sent out a telegram about political instability in Pakistan. U.S. officials worried that recent remarks made in the Pakistani press by President Mirza would lead to the government crumbling. Mirza wanted to establish “some form of

authoritarian rule as a solution to the present unsatisfactory situation.” The Department refused to take any action lest it anger any of Pakistan’s leaders.\textsuperscript{13}

U.S. diplomats in Karachi ignored the domestic turmoil in Pakistan and prepared for Prime Minister Suhrawardy’s visit to Kabul in June. Dulles told diplomats in Karachi to meet with Suhrawardy and discuss three key objectives that the U.S. wanted him to broach with his counterpart in Kabul. Washington envisioned Pakistan and Afghanistan improving their relations through trade agreements, an exchange of ambassadors, and simplifying the transit process between the countries. Dulles claimed “substantial progress has already been made in orienting Afghanistan towards [the] free world and away from complete dependence on the Soviets.”\textsuperscript{14} Such progress was difficult to discern, however. Afghani and Pakistani relations were at an all-time low before 1957. The countries had called diplomats home and engaged in a vicious propaganda war. Trade between them ended and no progress on the Pushtunistan issue had been made.

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan did improve slightly after Suhrawardy’s visit to Kabul in June, however. While in Afghanistan, Suhrawardy stated that Pakistani and Afghani leaders should work together in order to “bring the peoples of the two countries together in the economic and cultural fields.” Specifically, he urged that steps be taken to solve regional disputes such as Pushtunistan by working with the United Nations and other international organizations.\textsuperscript{15} At a dinner hosted by Prime Minister Daoud, Suhrawardy proclaimed that Pakistani and Afghani officials should

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\item \textsuperscript{13} FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 479-480.
\item \textsuperscript{14} FRUS, 1955-1957, 8: 254-255.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, \textit{Joint Communiqués 14 August 1947 - December 1957} (Islamabad: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1977), 106-107.
\end{itemize}
“teach our people to have love for and cherish one another. Let us forge such ties and nothing will be able to break…our differences.” The visit ended with both nations agreeing to send ambassadors to each other’s capital immediately.

On an official visit to Washington, D.C. shortly after his trip to Afghanistan, Suhrawardy met with Secretary of State Dulles and other U.S. policymakers. The Prime Minister stated that he had got on well with the Afghans during his recent visit to Kabul. Suhrawardy wanted to “get the people of Afghanistan on our side.” He did mention that the Russians were very active in the country and observed that they had completed “highly conspicuous projects.” He also reported that at the conclusion of his trip, the Afghans promised to tone down their propaganda regarding the Pushtunistan issue. Dulles believed that Suhrawardy was personally responsible for the improvement in relations between countries.

The easing of tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan did not stop the Afghans from courting the Soviet Union. On July 17, King Mohammad Zahir Shah and Naim landed in Moscow for an official state visit. Premier Bulganin and Marshal Kliment Y. Voroshilov met the Afghan royal party at Vnukovo airport. Marshal Voroshilov assured the King that “he would be among friends in the Soviet Union” and pledged that Moscow would “be a reliable and genuine friend of Afghanistan.” The King was touched by the airport reception and expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to

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visit a “friendly country.” During the Afghani leaders’ stay in the Soviet Union, Moscow officials agreed to aid Afghanistan in prospecting for oil and announced that a special commission to regulate boundary question would be created.

Ambassador Mills expressed his dismay at the King’s visit to the Soviet Union in a telegram on August 11. Mills noted that the Afghans’ acceptance of Soviet equipment was “foolhardy and reckless.” The Ambassador thought that the Soviets must be pleased with the results as they initiated a “new stage in Afghan-Soviet relations” by making Afghanistan more reliant on the U.S.S.R. Mills should not have been surprised by Afghanistan’s decision. Afghanistan knew that the United States could not be relied upon when it came to economic aid. The Soviets had continuously proven their ability to quickly supply Afghanistan with whatever it demanded. If anything, Mills should have expected that the Afghans would start to rely more on the Soviet Union due to America’s waffling policy.

Aside from economic assistance, the Soviet Union also provided Afghanistan with $25 million in arms. On September 1, The New York Times reported that Afghanistan would receive more military supplies from the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Naim declared that Afghanistan had asked the Soviets for arms because it did not find conditions favorable for obtaining arms from the United States or elsewhere. “Arms cannot be bought in the free market,” said Naim, “in order to buy them there must be an understanding between two governments. A prerequisite is the willingness of one

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friendly government to sell to another friendly government.” Naim told reporters that the arms would be used for defensive purposes only and that Afghanistan would continue its policy of “strict neutrality.” The foreign minister did mention that he was thankful for the Helmand Valley development project that America had sponsored, however, Afghan officials complained that the project imposed too heavy of a burden on the country and was not being completed in an orderly fashion.

The article then described how the Soviet bloc had obtained “propaganda mileage” by providing Afghanistan with infrastructure projects. Fourteen miles of paved road had been built so far in Kabul along with hydroelectric dams, automotive service shops, a chemical fertilizer plant, a motor road leading through the Salang Pass in the Hindu Kush mountains, and a military aircraft field. The Soviets were also training Afghani military officers in the country. The glaring absence of any American accomplishments confirmed that in remaining focused almost exclusively on Pakistan the U.S. was losing ground to the Soviet Union.

Internal instability in Pakistan itself highlighted the precious mess of U.S. policy. On October 18, President Mirza forced Prime Minister Suhrawardy to resign from his post. Mirza named Ismail Chundrigar to become Pakistan’s sixth Prime Minister. In November, the new U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, James M. Langley, expressed his dismay with Suhrawardy’s ousting in a memo to Washington. Langley thought that “the forced resignation of the essentially secular Suhrawardy government and emergence of

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23 “Pakistan Names Moselm Premier,” Los Angeles Times, October 18, 1957, 22.
Chundrigar” at the head of an unstable coalition whose common denominator is Muslim orthodoxy had set Pakistan back. In the struggle for power, the “colorless” Chundrigar would play only a secondary role to Mirza. The Chundrigar government took over with little confidence and with Pakistan deteriorating. Langley reported that only the military thrived while everything else was in serious decay. The little progress that Pakistan and Afghanistan had made in mending their relationship was lost once the new government assumed power.24

Washington policymakers also took steps that hurt the United States’ efforts in Afghanistan. On December 29, the State Department reported that it would cut the number of Americans working abroad. State officials said that Vice President Nixon was behind the decision to pare back American technical experts in underdeveloped countries. Nixon’s visits to the Far East and Africa led him to believe that there were too many Americans overseas and that they were too conspicuous, which fueled resentment toward the United States. The U.S. embassy in Afghanistan warned that “a renunciation of obligations would disturb relations with Afghanistan.” This would lead the Afghans to question America’s commitment to the country and ask the Soviets for more assistance.25

While officials in Washington were further undermining the United States’ policy in Afghanistan, diplomats in Kabul finally started to see that the U.S. strategy was not working. Ambassador Mills noted that during the past few years, America’s economic aid policy had been formulated as a reaction to the Soviet Union’s. The U.S. now had the


resources to provide Afghanistan with grants, which the Soviets were not comfortable doing. “This is a crossroads in Afghanistan’s history,” said Mills, “we [must] react positively, rather than drift and have our next major policy decision with respect to Afghanistan come as reaction to some Russian move.” If the United States made an offer now, it would challenge Daoud and Naim’s belief that the United States only cared about preventing Afghanistan from having close ties with the Soviet Union. Mills thought that when Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge visited Afghanistan in February he should tell the Afghans that President Eisenhower authorized a $30 million grant to be given to Afghanistan over a period of two years. The Afghans could choose which projects the aid should be used for. Millis concluded his memo by stating that it would be a “great mistake” if the U.S. followed its past policy. A fundamental reorientation of Afghan policy would be possible if the United States could seize the opportunity.26

Pakistani officials continued to persuade U.S. diplomats to listen to their advice regarding Afghanistan. According to the Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan, the United States should not try to influence the Afghan monarch anytime soon. Ambassador Khattak believed that the U.S. suffered a great loss of prestige due to the realization that the U.S.S.R. had an ICBM.27 Khattak claimed that certain Afghans in Pakistan thought that they could launch a coup d’état and overthrow Daoud and the King. For now, Khattak told his sources that the GOP was committed to a peaceful approach to Afghanistan. Ambassador Mills thought that Khattak had “good sources” but tended to


27 Khattak was referring to the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union.
over dramatize the situation in Afghanistan. Like so many U.S. officials before him, Mills refrained from telling the Pakistani Ambassador that he knew he was exaggerating.\(^\text{28}\)

King Zahir Shah made a state visit to Pakistan on February 1. Mirza welcomed the King to Karachi by announcing that Pakistan and Afghanistan were two friends who were tied together by centuries of history. Mirza believed that the King’s visit to Pakistan would further strengthen ties between the nations.\(^\text{29}\) The U.S. embassy reported that although “no hard and fast substantive accomplishments” were made during the visit, it created a better atmosphere for the conduct of Pakistani-Afghani relations.\(^\text{30}\) In fact, the Pakistanis could not have cared less about the Afghan monarch’s visit. The new Pakistani Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon was focused intently on whether the United States would sell bombers to Pakistan.\(^\text{31}\) Britain had recently sold bombers to India, and the Pakistanis wanted more American bombers to offset India’s new fleet.\(^\text{32}\) Pakistan’s primary goal was to build up its military arsenal. Relations with Afghanistan took a back seat to Pakistan’s worries about India. Washington knew that Pakistan’s main worry was India, and aided Pakistan in strengthening itself as long as it remained a staunch non-communist ally.


\(^{30}\) *FRUS, 1958-1960, 15*: 220.

\(^{31}\) Prime Minister Chundrigar was forced to resign after two months in office by President Mirza.

State Department officials still fretted over whether U.S. activity in Afghanistan would anger the Soviet Union. The head diplomat in charge of Pakistan and Afghanistan affairs thought that any attempt to send American personnel to Afghanistan would escalate tensions with the Soviets. Similarly, policymakers at the Department of Defense (DOD) refused to send a small number of U.S. military personnel to Afghanistan to train the army. According to the DOD, “putting any kind of military mission in Afghanistan would inevitably lead to the generation of demands for material which we are not prepared to meet at this time.”

Although the embassy in Kabul wanted to change the United States’ policy in Afghanistan, other branches of the U.S. government refused to budge or to make any commitments. The U.S. government’s failure to come up with a consistent policy for Afghanistan doomed its effort. Instead, Washington continued to send mixed signals to the Afghans.

After Ambassador Lodge arrived back in New York, he sent the State Department a memo about his visit to Afghanistan. Lodge thought that U.S-Afghan relations were improving slightly and that there had been no change in Afghanistan’s position of neutrality. To ensure the U.S. would improve its relationship with Afghanistan, Lodge recommended a number of economic and military programs that Washington could adopt. The United States had a reputation in Afghanistan for starting grandiose projects but failing to complete them. In order to dispel the belief that the United States did not really care about Afghanistan, Washington had to expedite its aid/policy process.

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33 FRUS, 1958-1960, 15: 221.
On May 29, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed an agreement that called for the creation of transit facilities in both countries.\textsuperscript{35} Five days later, Prime Minister Noon announced that a road from Peshawar to Kabul would be built. Noon thought that the “extension of trade and more liberal use by Afghanistan of Pakistan’s rail and road communication would benefit Afghanistan.” He also believed a road between Peshawar and Kabul, in addition to the extension of railroads through the Khyber and Bolan Passes, would improve relations between both countries.\textsuperscript{36} Although the agreement was a step in the right direction, both countries had been unable to conduct normal diplomatic relations for years. Embarking on a massive infrastructure project would not instantly solve this problem. If anything, it could cause a further deterioration in relations and lead to an escalation in tensions.

On June 24, 1958, Prime Minister Daoud landed in Washington for a state visit. After President Eisenhower honored him with a luncheon at the White House, Daoud proceeded to Foggy Bottom for a meeting with Secretary of State Dulles.\textsuperscript{37} Daoud started off the meeting by discussing how the U.S. refused to provide arms to the Afghans. This had forced Afghanistan to ask the Soviet Union for armaments. The Secretary understood why the Afghans went to the Soviet Union, but warned Daoud against depending too much on the Russians. Dulles stated that the Soviets’ used trade primarily for political purposes. “The United States,” said Dulles, “wanted a peaceful


world. We have never used economic or military power to dominate other nations.”

Daoud then mentioned that the Afghans went to the Soviet Union for weapons because of its poor relations with Pakistan. The Prime Minister stressed that although some progress had been made with Pakistan, “Afghanistan’s political problems with Pakistan still exist.” Daoud then added that although Afghanistan wanted a peaceful solution to the problems with Pakistan, “nothing was being done toward a solution of these political problems.”

The lack of a firm response from Washington to Daoud’s brash statement revealed that U.S. policymakers were completely out of touch with the situation in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister admitted that Afghanistan had been taking no steps to solve any of its problems with Pakistan. It showed that Afghanistan was not committed to improving its relationship with its neighbor. State Department officials could have confronted Daoud and demanded an explanation for his intransigence. That they did not suggests that the State Department did not want to anger Daoud and push him further into the Soviet sphere. Yet by not responding, the United States was helping to sabotage its own efforts to help Afghanistan establish a healthier relationship with Pakistan and the West. In essence, Washington was signaling Kabul that it could continue its policy of doing nothing.

Daoud met with other U.S. government officials while he toured the United States. At one point, the Deputy Director of Near Eastern Affairs asked Daoud why the United States was on the defensive in Asia. Daoud said that the U.S. “has too frequently identified nationalism in Asia with communism,” which angers Asians. The Untied

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States’ relationship with European colonial powers had also provoked outrage in Asian countries that were once under the imperialist yoke. Moreover, he noted the “red tape” connected to American assistance programs frustrated him and other Asian leaders. The Deputy Director claimed that the United States’ system “was at a distinct disadvantage as over against a totalitarian one although some improvement[s]” to reducing the red tape were being made.\textsuperscript{39} Daoud’s critique exposed the flaws in the United States’ policy towards Afghanistan. The State Department’s slow reactions and “red tape” led Afghanistan to ask the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries for assistance.

In July, the fall of the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq ratcheted up tensions in the region.\textsuperscript{40} The Pakistani Ambassador in Kabul predicted that the fall of the Afghan Royal family was imminent. The hysterical Ambassador told U.S. Ambassador Mills that the Soviet Union would quickly fill the breach in Afghanistan by supporting a communist regime. Mills noted that the present regime in Afghanistan “enjoys very little, if any, popularity.” Yet he thought that the current rulers of Afghanistan were preferable to any alternative. Once again, Pakistan seemed to be exaggerating the threat to Afghanistan. Indeed, the current Afghan regime had been more stable than Pakistan’s fractious government, which had featured a revolving door of prime ministers.

On October 4, Pakistan jolted its relations with Afghanistan and the U.S. by precipitating yet another government crisis. President Mirza informed Ambassador Langley that “he would take over the Government of Pakistan probably within a week

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15:} 235-236.

\textsuperscript{40} On July 14, an Army revolt broke out in Iraq. King Faisal, Crown Prince Abdul Ilah, and General Nuri al-Said were assassinated and a republican regime was proclaimed.
and simultaneously proclaim martial law.” Mirza claimed that he was preventing the army from seizing control of the country. The U.S. urged Pakistan’s president not to abandon the “democratic path.” Mirza brushed aside Langley’s private, but official, objection and declared martial law on October 7. The President then arrested a number of Pushtun Pakistani political leaders under the Security of Pakistan Act, which angered Afghani policymakers. It seemed as if every time Pakistan and Afghanistan made any progress in improving their relations, it was dashed by Pakistani domestic politics.

The Afghan Ambassador to the United States Mohammad Hashim Maiwandwal worried about the absence of a government in Pakistan. Maiwandwal told Assistant Secretary of State Rountree that Afghans found the arrests of the Pushtun leaders unacceptable. The Afghani ambassador thought that Mirza had played a huge role in improving ties between the countries. According to Maiwandwal, Mirza “had shown a will and determination to meet the Pushtu[n] point of view.” He hoped that Mirza would not do anything else that could jeopardize the Pakistani-Afghani relationship.

President Mirza did not get any more opportunities to influence Pakistani policy. On October 27, he stepped down and swore in Army General Mohammad Ayub Khan as President. Mirza claimed that he was abdicating power “because two man rule might hamper attempts to restore political stability to the pro-western country.” Ayub held Mirza in Quetta, the isolated capital of Baluchistan for a few days and then sent him into exile in Great Britain. Ambassador Langley was the only diplomat to bid Mirza farewell

at the Karachi airport. Ayub maintained that the decision to make himself chief of state was “taken in the larger interests of the country.”

U.S. diplomats in Karachi met with Ayub two days later. The new President of Pakistan stated that he wanted to maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan. Ayub favored the present regime in Afghanistan but worried about Soviet infiltration of the country. The arrests of the two Pushtun leaders in Pakistan, he insisted, was “an internal GOP security problem and in no way intended as an affront to Afghanistan.” According to Ambassador Langley, Ayub’s mind was “concentrated on more pressing internal problems.” The U.S. refused to prod Ayub on the issue and refrained from stressing the importance of a friendly relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

When Afghan Foreign Minister Naim met with Ambassador Mills in November, he explained that Afghanistan and Pakistan needed to cooperate for security reasons. Prime Minister Daoud agreed with Naim’s statement and also thought that the arrests of the Pashtun leaders would lead to tension between the countries. If Pakistan failed to create a new government that included Pashtuns, Daoud feared that this “would cause adverse reactions among Pashtuns” in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mills suggested that when Ambassador Langley came to Kabul he should tell the Afghans to “exercise patience” with Pakistan.

On November 24, Mills gave a frank assessment of Washington’s policy in Afghanistan in a memo to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and

44 Kux, 100.


46 FRUS, 1958-1960, 15: 244-245.

South Asian Affairs. Despite the Afghans’ “psychotic suspicion of all foreigners” Mills observed, “there is a good feeling towards the United States.” Mills acknowledged that Afghanistan would not be a democracy anytime soon. Afghans realized that the United States was too distant and unwilling to play a major role in the security field. Since the rulers of Afghanistan did not mind the totalitarian aspects of the U.S.S.R., they accepted Soviet aid because it could be collected quickly. The United States’ “record of achievement in the technical and economic assistance fields has not been very impressive to date.” Washington had been unable to provide the Afghans with any of the advice that they had requested. Mills was more concerned with how General Ayub would handle relations with Afghanistan. “There is not much we here in Kabul can do,” said Mills, “unless and until General Ayub in some way shows that he has something of the comprehension of the political relationship with Afghanistan which was developed by General Mirza.” Ayub had not taken any action or made any gestures that would give Afghani hope that Pakistan might approach the Pushtunistan issue with flexibility and understanding.48

In fact, Ayub had made comments that angered U.S. policymakers and their counterparts in Afghanistan. In a meeting with Ambassador Langley, Ayub claimed that India was in trouble and this made him happy. At the same time, Ayub indicated his personal inclination, as President of Pakistan, was to let the Afghans “stew in their own juice too,” despite the possibility of Afghanistan turning towards the Soviet Union, which would not be in Pakistan’s interest.49 Mills had finally realized that Pakistan’s refusal to

improve its relationship with Kabul was detrimental to U.S. policy. Pakistan’s leaders
had undermined U.S. policy by not engaging in talks with Afghanistan and making
inflammatory remarks. Mills noted that the Afghans trusted the Untied States’ word that
after Ayub took over in Pakistan he would try to mend relations with Afghanistan.
America’s assurances did not appear to be convincing.

The United States had numerous opportunities in 1957 and 1958 to improve its
relationship with Afghanistan. Afghani leaders looked the other way when it came to the
United States’ past actions and expressed interest in joining Western security pacts and
trade agreements. Some American officials advocated for the United States to reach out
to Afghanistan and bring it into the Western world, while others remained unduly
committed to current policies. Washington continued to fear the Soviet Union’s reaction
to its policies in Afghanistan and accordingly refrained from stepping up economic aid.
U.S. officials’ inability to influence Pakistani policy also hurt Washington’s strategy in
Afghanistan. Pakistan was more concerned with its India than the threat from
Afghanistan. Domestic instability in Pakistan also hampered U.S. and Afghani efforts to
bring about a solution to the countries’ problems. Instead of altering the current strategy
towards Afghanistan, the United States decided to stay the course. American officials did
not push hard enough when talking to Afghani or Pakistani leaders. Swinging to a pro-
Afghan policy would alienate Pakistan, which the United States still viewed as a key ally
in the fight against communism. Officials in Washington would not risk undermining a
valuable relationship with Pakistan by supporting Afghanistan. Unfortunately for the
United States, the Soviet Union capitalized on Washington’s reluctance and forged new
ties with Afghanistan.
Afghani Foreign Minister Naim started off the New Year by flying to Moscow to meet with Soviet apparatchiks. During his visit to the U.S.S.R., Naim discussed Soviet-Afghan relations with Khrushchev. When Naim returned to Afghanistan on January 6, 1959, Moscow radio reported that the Soviet Union would help Afghanistan with infrastructure projects and extend economic aid to the country. The Soviet Union also announced that it would provide Afghanistan with telegraph cables so the Afghans could improve communication between their cities.

The United States did not idly sit by while the Soviets and Afghans were bolstering their relationship. Ambassador Maiwandwal had told American diplomats that the failure of Afghanistan’s wheat crop in 1958 would devastate the Afghani economy. Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Douglas Dillon argued that the United States had to react quickly and deliver wheat supplies to the Afghans. Afghanistan would “reluctantly” turn to the Soviet Union if the United States hesitated. Naim’s recent trip to the Soviet Union led U.S. policymakers to assume that Afghanistan was under heavy pressure to align itself more closely with the U.S.S.R, which was an incorrect assumption. Dillon thought that “a speedy furnishing of the relatively small amount of wheat requested—might be of great significance to Afghanistan in enabling it to maintain

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its posture of neutrality at the present rather serious time in its affairs.”

If the Americans could push through a quick resolution to get wheat to Afghanistan, they would finally be taking advantage of an Afghan opportunity.

State Department officials first had to meet with Prime Minister Daoud before any decision could be made. Daoud asked Ambassador Mills why there were so many delays when implementing U.S. aid projects. According to Mills, Washington’s “time consuming recruiting and contracting procedures” were a necessary feature of the United States’ democratic system. The Ambassador admitted that authoritarian regimes (U.S.S.R) tended to get technicians on the job more quickly. Daoud, however, believed that there were political reasons behind why the United States withheld aid to Afghanistan. The Prime Minister stated that certain points in U.S. policy created apprehension in countries like Afghanistan, specifically the “new military alliances” with Pakistan and Iran.

Even though Daoud had doubts about the United States’ objectives in the region, he still welcomed U.S. assistance. Afghanistan’s rulers wanted to maintain their nations independence and continue to work with the United States. Mills worried that Afghanistan would become “so mortgaged to [the] U.S.S.R. that it would find it impossible to remain neutral.” Daoud claimed that Afghanistan preferred not to move to either side, but would do so if it had no other alternative. “Unilateral treatment of Pakistan and Iran,” said Daoud, “not only recently but over a period of several years had pushed RGA towards [the] Soviets.” After the conversation ended, Mills noted that

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Daoud showed no trace of rancor towards the United States. The ambassador believed that Afghanistan would maintain its neutrality unless it was forced to do otherwise.⁵

Secretary of State Dulles worried that Pakistan’s attitude towards the Afghani government could lead to problems. Ayub had warned U.S. policymakers that the Afghani government’s policies were a serious threat to Pakistan. Dulles told the Pakistanis that it was in the interest of the free world, including Pakistan, to support King Zahir, Daoud, and Naim. According to the Secretary of State, the United States did not think that the present Government of Afghanistan posed any threat to its neighbors in spite of military and economic assistance that it “unfortunately” accepted from the U.S.S.R. Pakistan should try to make any gesture that could reassure the Afghanis of its sympathy and friendship.⁶

The Secretary of State’s discussion with the Pakistanis mirrored previous meetings with officials in Karachi. Dulles told the Pakistanis that they were exaggerating the Afghani threat and that they should try to reach out to their neighbors. Yet the Secretary of State refrained from pushing the Pakistanis too hard. Dulles knew that Pakistan was a staunch American ally in the fight against communism and did not want to anger an already unstable government. The Secretary of State viewed the issues between Pakistan and Afghanistan as localized problems that would best be left to the two nations to settle on their own. Outside arbitration had not worked years before so there was little point in wasting the time and resources now. So far as Dulles was concerned, the Pakistanis could continue their hyperbole uninterrupted, although the U.S.


would take care not to neglect the Afghanis. The U.S. was still committed to stopping the Soviets from taking over Afghanistan.

On January 12, the Department of State announced that it would send up to 50,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan to avert a grain shortage that had been developing for some time. Afghani leaders thanked the United States for their assistance and hoped that Washington would continue to respond to Afghanistan’s needs. The United States had finally reacted quickly and taken advantage of an opportunity to help Afghanistan. U.S. officials now had to maintain this approach in order to satisfy Afghanistan’s leaders. A failure to do so could result in a loss of prestige for the United States and encourage Afghanistan to turn to its northern neighbor.

As Ambassador Mills’ time in Afghanistan came to an end, Dulles wanted him to stress a few key points during his farewell calls to the Afghani Royal family. Mills was to express confidence that Afghanistan and Pakistan would “adopt constructive measures for settlement of outstanding disputes” and assure the Afghanis that U.S. arms to Pakistan were not designed in any way to threaten Afghanistan. What measures was Dulles alluding to? The peace talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the Pushtunistan issue had broken down in 1955. Dulles knew that Pakistan had refused to engage in productive talks about border issues with Afghanistan. Since then, U.S. arms supplies to Pakistan and the refusal to supply Afghanistan forced the Afghani ruling family to ask the Soviet Union for military weapons. Regardless of what Afghani leaders told U.S

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diplomats, they remained convinced that arms supplies to Pakistan undermined their
countries' security. In essence, both Pakistan and to a lesser extent Afghanistan paid lip
service to U.S. efforts to resolve their differences, however, Pakistan still relied on the
United States’ for weapons and economic aid.

The U.S. and Pakistan signed a bilateral security agreement on March 5. This
was an executive agreement, which, unlike a treaty, did not require Senate approval.
Article 1 stated that in case of aggression against Pakistan, the United States should “take
such appropriate action, including the use of armed forces as may be mutually agreed
upon.” Foreign Minister Qadir of Pakistan acknowledged, however, that the treaty gave
“nothing new” to Pakistan since it already had a U.S. commitment against communist
aggression under SEATO. As Daoud had remarked a few months earlier, these types of
agreements with Afghanistan’s neighbors angered the Afghans. In Kabul, Afghani
policymakers saw this as typical behavior on the part of the United States and knew that
they had only one option, to turn to the Soviet Union for assistance.

The new U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Henry A. Byroade wrote a detailed
memo in April about his views on the country. The “oriental courtesy and kindness”
touched Byroade and amounted to “a plea to help them help themselves.” Byroade did
not think that communist ideological propaganda threatened Afghanistan. Afghans
appreciated how the United States helped them improve education inside the country.
Byroade concluded that “Afghan firmness to keep Soviets out of education field and their
continued pleas to us for more help in this field” were good signs. The Ambassador saw
the economic and military dependence of Afghanistan on the Soviet Union as the biggest

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threat to the country. Accordingly, he recommended that “every feasible thing that can be done by Pakistan to facilitate the flow of goods and people to and from the West must be worked for.” The ambassador was less decisive on the Pushtunistan issue, however. After discussions with numerous policymakers from both countries, Byroade could not accurately define the problem in Pushtunistan and thought that solving the issue was an “illusive thing.” He also urged the United States to stop pouring money into wasteful projects and focus on a few small infrastructure plans. “I would rather assume full responsibility for mistakes we may well make,” said Byroade, “than to follow our past approach of arousing Afghan enthusiasm and cooperation on new ventures on which no progress may be seen for some years.”

Byroade accurately critiqued U.S. policy in Afghanistan and broached subjects that previous officials refrained from discussing. Pakistan’s cooperation was key to the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. If the Pakistanis kept stonewalling U.S. efforts to help Afghanistan’s economy embrace the Western model, Afghanistan would have to rely on the Soviet Union. This would not only prevent the United States from attaining its goals but would also hurt Pakistan’s own policy. Pakistan would have to divert more resources from defending its border with India in the east to Afghanistan in the west. As Byroade shrewdly concluded, the biggest threat to Afghanistan was not communist infiltration but dependence on the Soviet Union. The United States needed to invest in realistic projects in the country and finish them. “White Elephant” projects such as the Helmand Valley irrigation system were wasteful. Ambassador Byroade’s suggestions were pointing the United States in the right direction.

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While the United States started to reassess its policy in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Daoud travelled to the Soviet Union for a state visit in May. Khrushchev and other senior Soviet diplomats greeted Daoud as he stepped off the plane in Moscow. Daoud and Khrushchev discussed Soviet-Afghani relations and the arms race between the East and West. The Soviet Premier announced that Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had a close relationship and that the Soviet Union should serve as a model to other countries. Both leaders agreed that Soviet technicians would help the Afghans build a road from Kushk to Kandahar and a military airfield in Western Afghanistan. The Soviet Union’s infrastructure projects and economic aid dwarfed the amount that the United States gave, handing the U.S.S.R another psychological victory.

By mid June, Byroade and the State Department became extremely worried at the rapid pace of Soviet progress in Afghanistan. The Soviets’ projects and aid gave them a “public relations effect” in Afghanistan that the United States did not have. Members of the Afghan government expressed their dissatisfaction with the U.S effort. The Commerce Minister thought that the United States dragged its feet on purpose. “We have been further disturbed,” said Byroade, by the “large number of high-level Afghan visits to Moscow since the beginning of this year.” According to the State Department, the trend of events in Afghanistan went against the United States and unless that could be halted or changed, Afghanistan would become a Soviet satellite. “Nothing could be as effective in reversing this trend,” Byroade advised, “as a rapprochement with Pakistan.

which can only be brought about if tensions over Pushtunistan issue are eased.” The U.S.
also had to show the Afghans concrete results from U.S. assistance programs and
overcome any problems that could arise in implementing them in a timely manner.\textsuperscript{14}

The United States did not alter its policy despite the recommendations from the
State Department and diplomats in Kabul. Instead, Washington pursued old strategies
that had not worked in the past. At a National Security Council meeting in August,
C.I.A. director Allen Dulles concluded that it would be very difficult to stop the Soviets
from penetrating Afghanistan. Dulles noted that Soviet assistance in the country was
“quite large” and that the U.S. could not beat them in an economic battle. Dillon felt that
the United States “should not try to match Soviet assistance to Afghanistan dollar for
dollar.” The director suggested, like so many policymakers before him, that solving the
Pushtunistan issue would help the U.S. position in the country.\textsuperscript{15} Yet Dulles did not
suggest how that could be done nor did he mention how important Pakistan’s efforts
would be. The Americans had conceded defeat, but would continue to worry about
Afghanistan falling to the Soviets.

One month later, Washington announced Soviet activity in Afghanistan
threatened U.S. interests in South Asia, the Middle East, and the entire Indian
subcontinent.\textsuperscript{16} The memo discussed how and why the Soviets were so successful in
Afghanistan. It also broached steps that the U.S. could take to thwart Soviet
machinations in the country. These steps were virtually the same as what Ambassador


\textsuperscript{15} FRUS, 1958-1960, 15: 279.

\textsuperscript{16} Jeffery J. Roberts, \textit{The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan} (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 208-209.
Byroade had outlined months earlier. Speed, trade, and helping Pakistan and Afghanistan solve their problems were the key issues on which the United States had to act.\textsuperscript{17}

In order for the United States to make any progress, it needed Pakistan to be on board with its objectives in Afghanistan. Pakistani Foreign Minister Qadir thought that Afghanistan had gone “too far” and was in the Soviet camp. Qadir worried about the new roads and airfields that Soviets were helping the Afghans build. The modernization of Afghanistan threatened Pakistan and could not be tolerated. According to Qadir, the United States should tell Daoud that “playing with the Russian bear” was very dangerous. The new Secretary of State Christian Herter remarked that on Daoud’s last visit to the United States he was friendly and cordial. Herter suggested to Qadir that Pakistan “give Afghanistan facilities for trade through Pakistan so that its growing volume of trade with the U.S.S.R. could be reduced.” Qadir gave the standard Pakistani response: Pakistan had done everything to cooperate with Afghanistan and looked forward to the opportunity to work with them. Before the meeting ended, Qadir excoriated Afghani leaders for propaganda concerning Pushtunistan.\textsuperscript{18}

Foreign Minister Naim met with President Eisenhower on October 12 at the White House. The President told Naim that the United States “will be in your corner” when it came to dealing with the Soviet Union. Eisenhower suggested that Afghanistan work on its issues with Pakistan even though the problems were not easily solvable. Naim told the President that Afghanistan had tried to negotiate with the Pakistanis, but that the new government in Pakistan developed a “cold and distant” manner when the

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15}: 280-285.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15}: 285-286.
Afghanis attempted any discussions. The Foreign Minister thought that Afghanistan’s main problem was its economic dependence on the Soviet Union. Certain Soviet states that bordered Afghanistan were making a “leap forward” while Afghanistan remained mired in the past.\(^\text{19}\) Afghanistan needed new roads, schools, and infrastructure to keep up with the pace of modernization around them. The United States’ inability to help Afghanistan along with Pakistan’s refusal forced the Afghanis to depend on the Soviet Union. Eisenhower told Naim that he understood Afghanistan’s desire for further progress and hoped that the foreign minister would broach the subject when he met with State Department officials.\(^\text{20}\)

When Naim met with the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs G. Lewis Jones Jr. he repeated his concern about economic dependence on the U.S.S.R. The Assistant Secretary told Naim that the United States “did not intend to compete in an economic war with the Soviets in Afghanistan” and that U.S. was trying to convince the Afghans that a reasonable alternative to the Soviet Union existed. Naim reminded Jones that Afghanistan had turned to the Soviet Union for both economic and military aid only after the United States rejected its repeated requests. When the U.S. finally extended economic assistance, it had been “too little and too slow.”\(^\text{21}\) The Afghani Foreign Minister had proved his point.

As Naim met with State Department policymakers in one building, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister met with two U.S. officials from the Near Eastern and South Asian

\(^{19}\) Naim was referring to modern day Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.


Affairs division in another. Qadir thought that the United States should cut aid to Afghanistan in order to punish it for relying on the Soviet Union. Doing so would convince the Afghan Royal family that the Soviet Union was dangerous. The Royal Family, said Qadir, would be the first to go if the Soviets took over Afghanistan. The officer in charge of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Leon B. Poullada, countered that this would drive the Afghanis into the arms of the Soviets. The other U.S. diplomat told Qadir that Pakistan and Afghanistan should solve the Pushtunistan dispute. The United States considered Pushtunistan to be a problem that only Pakistan and Afghanistan could settle. Washington did not adequately understand the complexities of tribal affairs to intervene directly in the matter.\textsuperscript{22} Ironically, though the United States admitted that it did not want to help solve the Pushtunistan dispute, policymakers repeatedly stated that solving it was key to achieving their goals!

Back in Afghanistan, Byroade met with Daoud to discuss Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The Ambassador stressed the need for Afghanistan to work with Pakistan in resolving their lingering disputes. Byroade believed that Daoud could make progress with Ayub. Daoud said that if Pakistan and Afghanistan did not cooperate, Afghanistan would inevitably be drawn to one side (East or West). The Ambassador thought that the biggest stumbling block had been whether the Pakistanis and Daoud actually wanted a settlement.\textsuperscript{23}

Byroade’s assumption that Pakistani leaders did not want to cooperate proved accurate. During a fifty-minute conversation with Assistant Secretary Jones, President

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15:} 300-301.

Ayub spoke only about Pakistan’s problems with Afghanistan. Ayub felt threatened by Afghanistan’s reliance on the Soviet Union and repeated Qadir’s demand that the United States give Afghanistan “shock treatment” by cutting off all aid. The Pakistani leader thought Daoud “was bull-headed and stupid” and did not think he could negotiate with him. Jones suggested that Pakistan take the initiative and improve relations with Afghanistan. Pakistan’s action could lead to Afghanistan safeguarding its independence.\textsuperscript{24} Ayub seemed slightly receptive to the idea.

On December 3, President Eisenhower embarked on a “Peace and Friendship in Freedom” tour through eleven countries. The President arrived in Pakistan on December 7 for a two-day visit. Eisenhower met with Ayub and Qadir the following day to discuss U.S. policy in the region. Most of the conversation focused on Pakistan’s relationship with India.\textsuperscript{25} Ayub asked Eisenhower why the United States gave India aid. The Pakistani president felt threatened by India and wanted to know if Pakistan could still rely on the United States if war broke out.

After haranguing Eisenhower about Pakistan’s eastern neighbor, Ayub moved on to Afghanistan. According to Ayub, the Soviets were building roads in Afghanistan that could help them invade Pakistan once the communists took over. These roads posed a direct threat to U.S. and Pakistani interests in the Middle East and South Asia.\textsuperscript{26} President Ayub told Eisenhower that Afghanistan “had no intrinsic strength…no

\textsuperscript{24} FRUS, 1958-1960, 15: 311-313.


\textsuperscript{26} It is unclear what interests Pakistan had in the Middle East.
economic resources and no military power.” Eisenhower acknowledged that Afghanistan might be “down” the Soviet road but did not think the United States should stop providing aid. If the United States did, Eisenhower told Ayub that this would push the Afghans towards the Soviets. The United States’ “estimate of the situation,” said Eisenhower, “was not as gloomy as that set forth by President Ayub.” Ayub responded by telling Eisenhower that the Afghans were not Muslims but opportunists. The Pakistanis’ thought that the only thing important was Afghanistan’s space. If the Soviets got a hold of Afghanistan, they would be 500-600 miles closer to Pakistan and the Hindu Kush defensive line. The Pakistani president told Eisenhower to be careful when he went to Afghanistan the next day. The Afghans would deceive Eisenhower and ask the United States to give them more assistance.27

Afghanistan had been preparing for Eisenhower’s visit for months. All the leading newspapers in Afghanistan carried photographs and stories about Eisenhower’s life. The newspaper Islah published a special Eisenhower booklet that discussed the former General’s military victories and his desire for peace. As one diplomat stated, “although few outside Kabul knew his name, the coming visit of the ‘Shah’ of America provided a popular conversation topic.”28

At 8:30am on December 9, six Soviet Mig-17’s flown by Afghan pilots escorted Eisenhower’s 707 jet into Soviet-built Bagram airport. After a 21-gun salute from an Afghan honor guard armed with Soviet weapons and the playing of the national anthems,


Eisenhower and the King drove to Kabul on the roads the Soviet Union had just paved.\textsuperscript{29} The New York Times estimated that over 300,000 Afghanis jostled in the streets in order to see the President’s motorcade. A Times correspondent noted that most people along the route had no notion of who or even what “Eisenhower” was.\textsuperscript{30} Once the motorcade got through the crowds and arrived at the Chilstoon Palace, Eisenhower and King Zahir started discussing U.S.-Afghani relations.

President Eisenhower stated that he wanted “to become acquainted with the countries east of Athens and that the purpose of his trip was to persuade the peoples of that area to understand that they have a community of interests.” The King told Eisenhower that Afghanistan wanted to preserve its independence and hold the same values at Western countries. In order for Afghanistan to remain neutral, Eisenhower suggested that the country improve its relationship with its neighbors, specifically Pakistan. The King informed Eisenhower that Afghanistan had been trying to promote good relations with Pakistan but problems plagued the country’s effort. “A country cannot maintain a policy of neutrality,” said Eisenhower, “unless it has friends all the way around its borders.” Even though the Pakistanis were unreasonable, Afghanistan still had to work with them. The King explained how the Pakistani press and new government vilified the Afghani ruling family. American efforts to improve Afghan-Pakistani relations were not new; the Afghans appreciated whatever effort the U.S. could make. Eisenhower told Zahir “nothing was easy these days and that he was not a

\textsuperscript{29} Dupree, The Mountains, IV-107.

mediator but that he would certainly do what he could.”31 Once the meeting ended, Eisenhower boarded his Sikorsky Choctaw helicopter and flew back to Bagram. The President’s visit lasted just over six hours.

Afghani policymakers were elated with Eisenhower’s brief layover in their country. The Afghani Minister to Czechoslovakia told U.S. diplomats that the visit was important for three reasons: Eisenhower saw Afghanistan for himself and this should convince him that it is not communist but neutral; the personal contact between Eisenhower and Afghanistan’s rulers helped clarify several positions; American newsman could see and report to the American people of what is happening in Afghanistan. U.S. prestige soared in Afghanistan because of the President’s “personal charm and almost legendary reputation.”32

When President Eisenhower met with President Franco of Spain in Madrid on December 22, he spoke about his brief visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Eisenhower lambasted some of America’s “starry-eyed and academic type” liberals who criticized General Ayub when he seized power in a military coup. Before General Ayub took over, the President claimed Pakistan had been a very poor country that had been poorly administered. Ayub had been implementing reforms and improving the lives of the rural folk.33 In addition, the whole Pakistani nation was “strongly anti-communist and that alone was enough to make President Eisenhower very fond of it.”34

32 Dupree, The Mountains, IV-111-112.
The same could not be said for Pakistan’s neighbor to the west. According to Eisenhower, Afghanistan was the poorest country he had ever seen. Two or three families seemed to rule the entire country, which made it an oligarchy instead of an absolute monarchy. Eisenhower recalled how his plane was escorted by Soviet built MIG’s and that the Soviets had also constructed the airfield he landed on. Even though the Afghans claimed that they remained neutral, Eisenhower did not see how the Afghans would prevent the country from being dominated by the Soviet Union. As time went by, the United States started having doubts about Afghanistan’s willingness to remain neutral. The American press emphasized Soviet penetration of the country instead of the progress it had made remaining neutral.

On January 11, 1960, Afghani Foreign Minister Naim met with Pakistani President Ayub in Rawalpindi. There, the two officials discussed only “problems of mutual interest.” The meeting lasted just two and a half hours, and reports indicated that Ayub’s bluntness broke up the talks and widened the rift between the two countries. After the talks, Pakistani Foreign Minister Qadir claimed that Afghanistan stepped up its hostile propaganda campaign while Pakistan thought restraint and a “gentlemanly attitude” would be a better course to follow. Qadir then said that Radio Pakistan would respond to Radio Kabul’s lies. Ambassador Rountree told Qadir that this would lead to a propaganda war with Afghanistan. The Ambassador reminded Qadir that a tough stance

by Pakistan would push the Afghans towards the Soviet Union. Qadir suggested that the United States pursue a “soft and understanding approach” while Pakistan implemented tougher policies. The Pakistanis did not want to appear weak and thought that Afghanistan had to be punished.\textsuperscript{38} Pakistan would continue its hardheaded policy that forced the Afghans into the Soviet sphere of influence.

The U.S. embassy thought that Qadir’s comments would hurt U.S.-Afghani relations. Byroade lamented that Afghani leaders did not think the U.S. and Pakistan had different policies. “The RGA considers Pakistan, particularly Ayub so close to us,” said Byroade, “that it would never occur to them that we were not in step.” Afghani leaders thought that the United States led them down a “garden path” with foreknowledge that Pakistan would harden its position after the talks in January. Foreign Minister Naim said that Ayub’s regime “was even more adamant against the ‘Pushtunistan’ demand than President Mirza, who desired “to find some sort of solution.”\textsuperscript{39} The State Department informed Rountree that he had to tell Ayub to tone down his rhetoric. The recent propaganda exchanges would imperil Pak-Afghan relations. Under Secretary of State Dillon reminded Rountree that in 1955 Pakistan attempted to bring Afghans to “heel” through economic pressure and failed. That was followed by Afghanistan accepting large scale Soviet economic and military aid.\textsuperscript{40} Washington realized that Pakistan’s way of conducting policy was detrimental to U.S. interests.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15:} 330-332.

\textsuperscript{39} S.M. Burke and Lawrence Ziring, \textit{Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: A Historical Analysis} (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 207.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{FRUS, 1958-1960, 15:} 332-335.
The Afghanis ignored problems with Pakistan and instead focused on building massive infrastructure projects with Soviet help. In mid February, the Soviet Union agreed to give Afghanistan $22,400,000 in technical aid and financial assistance to help construct a dam in Jalalabad. Unlike the Americans who were “aloof” and shunned local life, Soviet technicians would assist the Afghanis with the projects and live with them.\(^{41}\) The Jalalabad dam would be Afghanistan’s “second most ambitious valley development” project. The first was the United States’ project in the Helmand River Valley, which Afghanis and American’s labeled a “White Elephant.”\(^ {42}\)

Soviet-Afghani relations were further strengthened by a visit from Khrushchev to Kabul. On March 2, Khrushchev’s Ilyushin-18 turboprop aircraft landed at Bagram airbase. Khrushchev’s welcome at Bagram closely resembled Eisenhower’s except that the Soviet premier gave a verbose reply to the King’s welcoming speech. The King and Khrushchev rode in the same gray Daimler as Eisenhower but took a longer route through Kabul where jubilant crowds welcomed the Soviet leader. The car stopped at Pushtunistan square where Khrushchev grinned broadly and waved a Pushtunistan flag that a local had given him.\(^ {43}\) At a dinner in his honor, Khrushchev delivered a rambling speech about Afghanistan’s bitter dispute with Pakistan and its cool relations with Iran. According to the Soviet leader, “certain quarters in certain countries” that had recently gained their independence were advancing the cause of “imperialist powers.”


\(^ {43}\) Dupree, \textit{The Mountains}, IV-114.
Khrushchev assured the Afghanis that the Soviet government condemned such behavior between neighboring countries.\textsuperscript{44} The Soviet premier hinted that the U.S.S.R. would increase its aid to Afghanistan if the country remained neutral, or better still, rejected all Western aid. Prime Minister Daoud emphasized that Afghanistan wished to remain neutral and friendly towards all nations.\textsuperscript{45}

On an overcast and rainy March 3, Khrushchev inspected Soviet-built silos, roads, and other construction projects in various parts of Kabul. Prime Minister Daoud had Khrushchev over for dinner where they discussed Afghani economic policy. Soviet journalists noted that Khrushchev’s visit to Afghanistan was better than Eisenhower’s because the Soviet Union gave more aid to the country. The newspaper \textit{Hivad} noted that “Soviet aid rendered to Afghanistan has no political strings attached to it…the Afghan people appreciate the friendly assistance of the Soviet Union.”\textsuperscript{46} The day before Khrushchev left Afghanistan, he and Daoud issued a joint statement about the “destiny of the Pashtu[n] people” and suggested that the United Nations should help the Pashtuns apply for statehood.\textsuperscript{47}

On March 6, Pakistani officials reacted to Khrushchev’s visit to Afghanistan and his statements regarding Pushtunistan. Foreign Minister Qadir claimed that by supporting Afghanistan on the Pashtun issue, the Soviet Union was meddling in Pakistani internal affairs. President Ayub said that Afghanistan’s claims were “without any legal

\textsuperscript{44} Paul Grimes, “100,000 Afghans Hail Khrushchev,” \textit{The New York Times}, March 2, 1960, 2.

\textsuperscript{45} Dupree, \textit{The Mountains}, IV-114-115.


foundation.” Qadir called on the Afghan government to stop anti-Pakistani propaganda and agree to a Pakistani proposal for a referendum among the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. According to Qadir, if the Pashtuns could vote as to whether they wanted to stay in Afghanistan or come to Pakistan, “their verdict would be in favor of Pakistan.”

The SEATO council issued a communiqué that stated that SEATO member countries recognized the Durand Line as the international boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Radio stations in Peshawar engaged in strong personal attacks against the Afghani Royal family. Afghani Prime Minister Daoud exacerbated the situation by claiming that Pakistan had been airing propaganda against Afghani reforms. Clearly, relations between the countries were rapidly deteriorating.

Instead of trying to ameliorate relations with Afghanistan, Pakistani leaders were focused on obtaining U.S. arms and aircraft. President Ayub wanted the United States to give Pakistan F-104 fighter aircraft. Ambassador Rountree told Ayub that this might hurt Pakistani-Indian and Pakistani-Afghani relations. Ayub was not concerned about that at all, he just wanted to make sure that the United States would help train the pilots. Rountree thought that “close secrecy should be maintained at this stage.” Ayub agreed and also asked for ground-to-air missiles and at least twenty-five F-104s. Pakistan obviously had other priorities than mending fences with Afghanistan.


The officer in charge of Pakistan-Afghani affairs Leon B. Poullada questioned U.S. military assistance to Pakistan in a letter to the U.S. embassy in Pakistan on March 14. Poullada wrote that the U.S. gave military arms to Pakistan in 1954 because American policymakers thought that the communists were going to advance into the Indian sub-continent. The aid would have helped Pakistan defend itself from the communist threat. “It is now fairly clear,” said Poullada, “that whereas we predicted our aid on the communist threat, the Pakistani were anxious to receive it principally in order to strengthen their position against India.” The U.S. did not think that the communists would invade Pakistan anytime soon unless the Soviets wanted a warm water port. Even though Pakistan claimed that Afghanistan and China threatened it, Poullada did not think either country would attack Pakistan for the moment. According to Poullada, “the Afghans themselves, could hardly, at this time, launch an effective attack against Pakistan should they wish to do so, which I doubt.”53 The U.S. had to examine its aid policy with Pakistan and make serious changes.

Back in Washington, the State Department did not know what the U.S. could do to improve relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan ignored the problem and refused to change its policy. Furthermore, Pakistani leaders had no trust in their Afghani counterparts and were obsessed with not looking weak. Afghani leaders had stood up to Khrushchev and maintained their independence, but Pakistan insisted that they were Soviet stooges. The embassy in Afghanistan thought that the “major present danger lies in the possibility that Pakistan attitude will push RGA into greater and greater reliance on the Soviet support and protection to [the] point where Afghanistan may

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indeed lose its independence.” Pakistani attacks on the Afghani royal family would also isolate Afghanistan and turn it toward the Soviet Union. U.S. policymakers concluded that Afghanistan was sincere in its desire to solve the Pushtunistan problem and that Pakistan should give the Afghans a chance. 54

On the other hand, the U.S. embassy in Karachi warned Washington that if it pushed the Pakistanis the wrong way it could seriously damage U.S. relations with Pakistan. British and Turkish diplomats in Karachi told U.S. officials that they felt like the United States was not supporting its Pakistani allies. Rountree did not want the Pakistanis to feel like the U.S. was abandoning them. 55 It would be difficult for the United States to change its policy towards Pakistan while its own diplomats harbored fears about alienating its ally.

In April, Ambassador Byroade and Rountree met with State Department officials to discuss Afghani-Pakistani relations. Byroade thought that even though the Soviet Union had been making inroads in Afghanistan, U.S. security interests in Afghanistan were worth a struggle. The United States had to build up the Afghans’ confidence in the West and support them. In closing, Byroade said that he felt the United States must decide to what lengths it would go to meeting the Soviet challenge in the country.

According to Rountree, the Pakistanis would only use hard tactics to deal with the Afghans and refused to back down. The ambassador did not think the United States could play a useful role in the dispute. Both ambassadors agreed that the personal

animosity between Ayub and Daoud would further complicate the situation. The United States’ inability to influence Pakistan and convince Afghanistan that it had interests in the country was starting to destroy Washington’s policy towards both countries.

The Afghanis continued to court the Soviet Union and the United States. On May 13, Khrushchev met with Prime Minister Daoud in Moscow while the Afghani recuperated from surgery. Afghan officials rejected a Soviet offer to fully finance their next five-year plan. The Afghanis preferred receiving aid from both the East and West.

While Daoud met with the Khrushchev, Soviet technicians discovered an oilfield in Northern Afghanistan near the U.S.S.R. border. Afghani officials wanted to export the oil to Western markets, yet they knew that creating an oil pipeline over the Hindu-Kush Mountains would be extremely difficult. Regardless of what Pakistan or the United States thought, Afghanistan was still open to improving its relationship with the West.

Byroade continued to tell the State Department that the United States had to bolster its credentials in Afghanistan by completing projects and dispersing aid quickly. The embassy informed Washington that the Afghanis would not hesitate to accept Soviet succor if the United States failed to provide it. If the United States did not alter its policy, it would “not meet the challenge[s]” faced in Afghanistan. Byroade believed the key goal was to implement projects and aid in an effective manner.

57  Adamec, 273.
Two months later in September, Byroade shifted his position and urged the United States to stall. The U.S. would help Afghanistan with its economic development but would not commit to a five-year plan. Byroade believed that “it would be tactically wiser for us to extract whatever short-run advantage there is in keeping the matter fuzzy and thereby encouraging Afghanistan to postpone” for as long as possible any final decision that might increase its dependence on the U.S.S.R.\(^{60}\) The ambassador was effectively undermining the policy he himself had set forth earlier in 1959.

Foreign Minister Naim met President Eisenhower in New York in late September. Eisenhower asked Naim if any progress had been made on Pushtunistan. Naim replied that the situation had been getting worse and his meeting with Ayub had achieved nothing. Eisenhower told Naim that he was impressed with Ayub and thought of him as a “reasonable and well-educated fellow.” The President thought that Pushtunistan was a situation “in which outsiders should [not] mix themselves. It was up to neighbors to adjust the difficulties between themselves so there could be peace and order in the world.” The Afghani minister reiterated his point that relations with Pakistan were deteriorating. Afghani officials had no faith in their Pakistani counterparts. The President recounted for Naim how the United States and Canada had border issues that took years to solve. Naim explained that it was not a question of location but ethic considerations. “Since the United States is a great friend of both parties,” said Naim, “it could be a useful element in a settlement.” Eisenhower suggested that the United Nations could help with the issue.\(^{61}\) By preventing the United States from taking a greater role in


the issue, Eisenhower enabled Pakistan and Afghanistan to continue their ineffective policies and undermined overall U.S. strategy in the region.

While Naim and Eisenhower were discussing policy, a quarrel developed in Afghanistan between the Khan of Khar, who was pro-Pakistani and the Nawab of Dir, who was pro-Afghani. The Afghani government decided to side with the Nawab and send in a Lashkar, or tribal army. On September 23, the Lashkar invaded Bajaur County in Pakistan. The Bajauris resented outside interference in what they deemed a private matter and united and thrashed the invaders without the help of any Pakistani troops. The remnants of the decimated Lashkar suffered further losses as they re-entered Afghanistan due to bad blood between the tribes composing it and the tribes along the Kunar valley.\(^6^2\) On September 29, Pakistan charged that hostile concentrations of Afghan troops were forming along their border. Foreign minister Qadir asserted that there were over 11,000 Afghani troops poised to invade Pakistan.\(^6^3\) The Pakistanis claimed that a major foreign power was backing the Afghani incursion. Sources in Pakistan’s government suggested that Afghanistan had called up 70,000 reservists and concentrated troops in Afghani cities near the border.\(^6^4\)

The State Department scrambled to figure out if the situation along the border would escalate into a full-blown war. Byroade called Daoud and told him the U.S. thought both countries should restrain themselves. Daoud informed Byroade that he


believed Pakistan had deliberately caused the problems. At a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting on September 30, officials discussed the Pakistani-Afghani border clash. U.S. policymakers wondered if the Soviet Union had forced the Afghans to mount this kind of offensive. Then again, officials thought that the situation “may have been caused by one of those periodic tribal differences.” Two U.S. Army generals thought the U.S. had to keep an eye on the situation and assuage any Pakistani concerns.65

Secretary of State Herter informed President Eisenhower that the United States should not intervene in the Pushtunistan controversy. “In view of our relations with Pakistan,” Herter advised, “it is important that we continue to recognize the Durand Line as the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan.” The Secretary added that the U.S. should quietly discourage further hostilities between Pakistan and Afghanistan.66 When Eisenhower left office a few months later, Afghanistan and Pakistan were still bickering about the border dispute. To this day, the quarrel continues.

Conclusion

From 1946 to 1960, the United States pursued three separate strategies in Afghanistan all of which were influenced by its perception of the Cold War as a zero-sum game. The first tenet of the United States’ Afghan policy was to prevent the Soviet

Union from making any inroads in the country. Officials in Washington believed that the Soviet Union was an expansionist power that had to be stopped at all costs. Even though Afghanistan was not a Cold War hot spot, the United States still sought to thwart communism’s advance. The United States succeeded in preventing an outright takeover of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, however, Washington’s policies ultimately forced Afghanistan to become dependent on the U.S.S.R.

The United States also wanted Afghanistan to establish friendly relations with its neighbors, Pakistan and Iran. The Eisenhower administration thought that a series of pacts and alliances between countries bordering the Soviet Union would prevent Moscow from expanding its regional influence. The United States included Pakistan and Iran in these pacts but neglected to offer membership to Afghanistan. Pakistan received massive amounts of U.S. economic and military assistance, while U.S. officials ignored Afghanistan’s pleas for aid. The United States did recognize the border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan as a conflict and acknowledged, unlike Vietnam, the relevance of local circumstances did matter in Afghanistan and U.S. policymakers were sensitive to domestic issues that had been plaguing the region for centuries. Yet the United States’ inability to help resolve the Pushtunistan dispute exacerbated the already poor relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The third and final strategy that U.S. policymakers pursued was to bring Afghanistan into the Western sphere of influence. U.S. officials believed that if Afghanistan could modernize its economy, it could start trading more extensively with Western countries. The United States’ refusal to give Afghanistan adequate amounts of
assistance and its focus on Pakistan prevented Afghanistan from establishing closer ties with the West. The U.S. had undermined each of its three strategies in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials did have moments of clarity during which they realized that Washington had to change its policy in order to achieve its goals in Afghanistan. These moments proved to be fleeting, as both members the State Department and White House refused to modify their positions. Cold War concerns prevented the United States from pressuring Pakistan to alter its policy towards Afghanistan. Officials in Washington did not want to go against the status quo and America’s anti-communism policies.
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