THE AFGHAN-SOVIET RELATIONS THROUGH THE SPECTRUM OF THE SOVIET PENETRATION DURING THE COLD WAR ERA.
FROM DAAR AL-ISLAM TO DAAR AL- MARX

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Abstract: The Soviet adventure in Afghanistan during the period 1979-1989, the reasons behind it and the outcome, are well known in the scientific community having been approached rather adequately by the experts of the field. Less well known, but familiar nonetheless, is the April (Saur) Revolution of 1978, which rose the Communist Party of Afghanistan to power, for the very first time in Afghan history. However, almost none from the scientific circles have pored over, but only allusively, the relations of the Soviet Union with the third world state of Afghanistan during the Cold War period. In that period, due to Moscow’s zestful attempts, a solid basis for the Soviet political and economic predominance in Afghanistan was created, which was challenged by the Mujahidin’s armed insurgency only when it was intensified by mid 1970’s. Originating in the early 1970’s, the enormous development of the insurgency movement, particularly in 1978-1979, resulted in the escalating inefficiency of the Communist Regime to suppress it, forcing Moscow to invade the country, overtly assuming the “protection” of the Communist Regime and the ideals of Marxism-Leninism. More specifically, the thirty year period that preceded the soviet invasion of December 1979 constitutes a progressive, careful and persistent attempt of Kremlin to fully control Afghanistan. The initial Exploratory Period (1945-1953) was succeeded by that of the Strategic Penetration (1953-1962) in the economic and military sectors of the Afghan state. Finally, the extremely successful attempt of controlling the structural and functional system of Afghanistan was succeeded by a long period of Changes in the Political System, Society and Politics of the country (1963-1979), during which Moscow through the creation of leftist and pro Soviet political parties achieved the historic turnaround of Afghanistan from Daar-al-Islam to Daar-al-Marxism- Leninism.

1. Brief Background of Afghanistan

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The continental country of Afghanistan is located in the region between South and Central Asia, bordering to the North with the Russia (Soviet Union), to the East with China and Pakistan, to the West with Iran and to the South with Pakistan. Traditionally it is considered as a buffer geostrategic zone between Russia (Soviet Union) and the Persian Gulf. Its strategic geographical location between the aforementioned states, as well as its bordering on the rich oil-producing Persian Gulf, always consisted the two main factors which have given it increased importance to Asian history and international politics. The Afghan society is composed of extremely disparate groups, in relation to their ethnic origin and cultural heritage. The prevailing group of Pastuns (major tribes those of the Durrani and Ghilzay) consists the largest ethnic group with a percentage of 38%, Tajiks follow with a 25%, Hazars with 19% and Uzbeks with 6%. In the period under investigation, the overwhelming majority of Afghans (82%) resided in the countryside engaged in agricultural and livestock-raising labours, which anyway, along with cottage industry (main handicraft activity the production of carpets and rugs) and some light industry units of spinning-mill and fertiliser production, consisted almost the sole parameters of the economic life of the country. In addition, Afghanistan had a variety of natural resources such as petroleum, coal and natural gas; the latter being the only resource exploited and exported to the neighbouring Soviet Union. Almost the total of the population which, in early 1980s, came up to approximately 17 million [1], believe in Islam with prominent denomination this of Shunts with 84%, while the denomination that follows is the one of the Shiites with a percentage of 15%. The two official languages of the state are the Pashto and the Dari, a Persian-origin dialect; although more than 45 languages and dialects are spoken such as Uzbek, Hazara and Rakhshani. As regards to the status of the state, Afghanistan, after a period of political turbulence, showed the first signs of stability 1933 onwards, when King Zahir Shah became head of the State as the Absolute Monarch. King Zahir managed to maintain a balanced foreign policy throughout his forty years of ruling until 1973, achieving the accession of the country into the Movement of the Non-Aligned states. In 1964, with his initiative, the institution of Constitutional Monarchy was established, based on the separation of executive, judicial and legislative authorities.

Afghanistan’s administration was traditionally based on a feudal system, strongly influenced by the element of tribalism. The economic-religious complex of the khans [2] ulamas [3] mullahs [4], in reality ruled the country under the shield of the King. While the informal institution of khan was derived from

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1 The Census of 1982 reports a total of 13.748.000 residents and 2.734.000 nomadic population.

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the Afghan tradition and based on wealth, and the institution of ulama-mullahs represented the religion of Islam, there was also the institution of maliks [5] delegates of the state acting as the intermediary channel between the state and the local societies [6]. The latter, mainly in the countryside, maintained a traditional form of self-administration, with Jirgah as the higher instrument, an assembly of the elders, the ultimate tribal Council, while the Grand National Assembly, Loya Jirgah, was the highest representative institution of the Afghan State.

2. The Afghan-Soviet Relations During the Cold War Period
As regards to the relations of Afghanistan with the Soviet Union, they never went to extremes in the post war period, till the day of the Soviet invasion in the country. On the contrary Moscow-Kabul relations were progressively improving, inevitably bringing Afghanistan into the “arms” of the Soviet Union. Indeed, Moscow, in the post war period, sought to incorporate Afghanistan in its sphere of influence. This was mainly attempted through the progressive rapprochement of the two countries, a process that initially included a series of Treaties for the economic and commercial cooperation, the provision of Soviet know-how and the technological and financial assistance in all strategic fields of the country, aiming at the complete dependence of Afghanistan on the Soviet Union. As a second step, there was attempt for the socio-political turn-around of the Afghan society, through the establishment of the Marxist-Leninist Party (PDPA), and its penetration in the working classes and the army, as well as through the thousands of Soviet advisers and specialists who were posted there by Moscow for the fulfilment of the Treaties. As a third step, one can characterize the determining support that was provided to Mohammed Daoud by the Communist Party, which at the time had split into two factions, Khalq

2 Wealthy landowners, heads of large families and leaders of a tribal faction. Traditionally, with a large number of people under their influence.
3 Islamic Scholars, Qur’anists, graduates of the madrassas Schools of Islamic Studies.
4 Though in other Islamic societies the titles indicates higher clergy, in Afghanistan the term refers to a village-level religious leader. Also called Imams, in Shi’a where the term holds more respect.
5 “…sometimes translated as village chiefs; they represented, in fact, a local qawm (there could be several maliks per village) and were elected by heads of families. They received a remuneration from the families they served and sometimes from the state, and in return they acted as registrars dealing with census returns, conscription and the collection of taxes; they also assisted those within their administrative area in their dealings with the authorities.”, Roy, Olivier, Islam and resistance in Afghanistan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.19.
6 Ibid., p. 19.
and Parcham, in the abolishment of Monarchy and the declaration of Afghanistan as a Republic, after the successful coup of 1973, aspiring the even closer ties with the Soviet Union. Finally, the fourth step was the Revolution of April 1978, (Saur Revolution) with the assumption of power by the reunified Communist Party and the declaration of the country as a Democratic Republic, which led to the outbreak of a civil war, which in turn resulted in the Soviet invasion in order to assist the governmental forces of the Communist regime. More specifically:

2.1 The period of Exploration
The first signs of Afghan-Soviet cooperation appeared during the period of 1945-1953, which can be considered as an exploratory period. Stalin avoided immediate interference in the area during his twenty years of ruling and was quite satisfied with the neutral attitude of Afghanistan. However, he tried to expand Soviet Union’s horizons relying on Afghanistan’s economic under-development, and also taking advantage of the historic coincidence of the Pashtunistan issue. More specifically, during late 1940’s the Afghan-Pakistan antagonism over the Pashtunistan issue drastically increased. Since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and the independence of Pakistan, armed conflicts begun, between Pakistan and Afghanistan with the dominance over Pasun tribes residing in newly founded Pakistan at stake. The massacres ended after an agreement between Soviet Union, Afghanistan and Pakistan, which finally drafted the borders. As it was natural, the unofficial sporadic encounters did not end while the official state of Afghanistan continued to have a claim for Pashtunistan independence, seeking international political support. The USA and other Western powers, were not willing to provide political back up to Kabul, regarding Pakistan as a more important and reliable choice for their geo-strategic interests in the area. Moreover, as a result of the conflict Pakistan abruptly closed its borders, cutting off Afghanistan’s strategic route of provisions [7]. Moscow, hurried to fill the vacuum and in July 1950 a Soviet-Afghan barter agreement was signed, concerning the exchange of Afghan agricultural products for Soviet petroleum products, clothing, sugar and other commodities. A further step forward was the supplementary agreement for the duty free transit of Afghan goods over Soviet territory [8]. Moreover, the timing of the USA’s denial for a commitment to secure Afghanistan’s northern border as a

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return for the participation of Afghanistan in a regional pro-Western security pack of states [9], led Kabul to adopt more realistic political and strategic view, according to which, Afghanistan’s progress could be achieved, among other ways, with Soviet Union’s assistance. On the other hand, despite the fact that Moscow’s attempt, during Stalin’s period, was far form having exceptional financial and even more political results, it marked the Soviet volition for economic and subsequent political, penetration in Afghanistan.

2.2 The Period of Strategic Penetration
The following decade, 1953-1962, can be characterised as the period of Soviet economic penetration in strategic sectors of the Afghan economy and the Afghan army and of the establishment of the foundations of Soviet economic influence in the country. Main factors that shaped the developments were the more extrovert foreign policy of the Soviet Union, in Khrushchev era and the rise of Prince Mohammed Daoud, first cousin of King Zahir Shah in power as Prime Minister in 1953. Given the traditional controversy between Pakistan and Afghanistan over Pastunistan and considering Pakistan’s participation in SEATO (1954) and Baghdad Pact (1955), as well as foreseeing the increasing importance of the Persian Gulf, Khrushchev “exploited the common antipathy and political dissent against Pakistan and worked for the creation of a strengthened cooperation between Moscow-Kabul for mutual benefit” [10]. In January 1954, Moscow offered a $3.5 million advance for the construction of two grain silos, a flour mill and a bakery. Repayment was to be made in kind (wool and cotton) and to start 3 years later at an interest rate of 3%. Furthermore, in July technical aid follows for the construction of gasoline pipeline across Amu Darya River and the erection of four gasoline storage tanks with 1 million gallon total capacity [11]. The zenith point of Khrushchev’s policy was the signing of the treaty of “Friendship and Solidarity”, during his visit in Kabul in December 1955, which provided for Afghanistan, apart from massive financial support, military assistance consisting of war material and training programs for Afghanistan officers. As it was clear, Prime Minister Daoud had selected not only to push Afghanistan to the twentieth century but also to utilise any available means to ensure this progress. At that time the economic cooperation with Moscow ap-

9 Idid., p.31.
11 Arnold, Anthony, Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion in perspective, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1981, p. 34.
peared as a reliable option. It is remarkable that the Soviet way of thinking influenced a great number of Afghan officials and scientists who initiated the Afghan first five year plan in 1955, utilising a $100 million loan, at no interest received from the Soviets at the same year. Moreover, financial, technical and military specialists were sent over to Afghanistan in order to support Afghan government in implementing the plan. Additionally, in 1956 a $25 million was received for the reorganisation and modernisation of the country’s arm forces whose first modern type weaponry were supplied by Moscow. The first five year plan was a laborious procedure for Afghanistan, not only for the country’s progress but for the determination of its relations with the Soviet Union. Significant infrastructure projects undertaken were among others the hydroelectric stations in Sharobi and Nagalu, the cement factory in Jabul Sheray and the chemical fertiliser factory in Mazar-e-Sharif. On the other hand the degree of dependency on Moscow geometrically increased. Indeed, by early sixties, Afghanistan was completely dependent on the Soviet Union for arms, 90% for petroleum products and 50% for foreign trade [12], while there was tendency for increase of these rates, due to the establishment of permanent financial and commercial relationship, something that fulfilled both Khrushchev’s and Daoud’s aspiration.

2.3 The Period of Changes in the Political System, Society and Politics of Afghanistan. From Daar al-Islam to Daar al-Marxism-Leninism

The sixteen years that followed, 1963-1979, were a period of successive political system and regime changes in Afghanistan which were mostly due to the extremely successful manipulations of Moscow. More specifically, the political system of the country progressively moved from Absolute Traditional Monarchy to Constitutional Monarchy in 1965, to Republic in 1973 and finally to Socialist Republic in 1978. Moreover, the aforementioned period was marked by the interfering influence of Moscow, initially through the oppositional activity of the Leftist Movement and Communist Party and subsequently, from 1978 onwards through the puppet governments that it tried to support survive, eventually resorting to the invasion. Despite the economic progress and improved standards of living that Afghanistan knew during Daoud’s ruling, he was called to step down by the King in 1963. It is a fact that Daoud was an authoritarian figure, with high concentration of power in his hand, and processing plans for reforms towards a more democratic direction that would downgrade the role of the King and the Traditional status quo. Although his

12 Ibid., p. 39.

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resignation was a setback for the Soviet plans for an increasing influence in Afghanistan, it marked the beginning of a Soviet attempt to achieve this goal, adjusting its tactics, widely using the power of the Afghan leftists. Daoud was never characterised as a communist, despite his close relations with the Soviet Union, continuing to support the non-aligned status and the neutrality of Afghanistan in international politics. Right after Daoud’s resignation, veteran communists such as Noor Mohammed Taraki, Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal, commenced the preparations for a new pure Communist Party, which was founded on January 1965, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), with the full support of Leonid Brezhnev. The party’s ideological orientations were clearly Marxist-Leninist, while its political target was the expansion of the Great October Revolution in Afghanistan [13].

Meanwhile, following careful elaboration, the King put the new Constitution to the people’s approval in 1964, which came in force the following year, after the elections. The new Constitution provided for two regulatory bodies, the Lower House of Parliament (Wolezi Jirgah) elected directly by the people and the Senate (Mesrano Jirgah). The King, who had to be Muslim Hannafi [14], appointed the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Supreme Judge and the more significant heads of civil and military services. Moreover, to indicate palace’s intention for a more democratic function, Dr. Mohammed Yousuf had been appointed as Prime Minister from 1963, one, for the first time in Afghan history, not related to the Royal Family. Despite Daoud’s removal the cooperation between the two countries continued unhindered renewing the “Treaty of Friendship and Solidarity” in 1965. At the same year’s elections the PDPA had four representatives elected, whose primary aim was to undermine the task of the parliament, a tactic that Moscow had applied not only in the Third World but in Western Europe as well.

A significant point in Modern Afghan History was the breach in the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1967, in two conflicting factions. These were the Khalq (Masses) under the leadership of Mohamed Taraki, also joined by Hafizullah Amin and the Parcham (The Red Banner Party), with Babrak Karmal at the head, named after the homonymous newspapers published by each respective leader. Even though the main causes for the breach were personal ambitions and antagonism between them, it appears that in time they developed slightly different political and tactical approaches. Taraki was more intellectual and compromising in his views, seeking a wider political alliance of

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14 A Sunnite sub-denomination.
the Afghan parties and aiming at a future political reform. He and Amin, believing in social fermentation and struggle of the classes, waited in “revolutionary” patience for the maturity of necessary conditions for the expansion of the “Great October Revolution”. On the other hand, Karmal was a radical activist who had managed to coil and activate leftist forces around his frontal revolutionary initiatives. Apart from objective difficulties, the struggles between the two factions, negatively affected the outcome of the 1969 elections, (only Amin and Karmal managed to get elected), rendering the prospects of a communist prevailing, in a western parliamentary model, non-existent.

Having outbid USA in the provision of financial and construction aid from the end of the war to mid 1960, Moscow adjusted its tactic and started to progressively reduce the aid [15] in order to hinder the developmental policy of the government, creating dissatisfaction in the popular classes. At the same time, it acted as the mediator for the reunion of the two factions of the communist party, promoting the exploitation of the popular dissatisfaction by them. Indeed, even though no actual reunion came about, there was a type of modus viventi aiming to the support of Daoud, who was Moscow’s most favorable option at that time, mainly because all his power came from the communist party and the leftist movement.

It is a fact that from 1964-1973 the two factions of the communist party engaged in wide propaganda among the masses and illegal activities in the army, preparing the grounds for the fall of monarchy in 1973. More specifically, they organised and directed more than 2,000 gatherings and protests of workers, students and intellectuals. In 1968, Afghanistan is shaken by the first pan-worker strike, as in more than 20 cities thousands of workers in mines, textile factories, building sites and transport refuse to work. Under the political guidance of the communist party, for the first time gatherings and demonstrations take place for Labor Day, in Kabul and other cities, with banners for the establishment of syndicates and against monarch and the USA. Finally, among others there is the successful abstention of students and professors in the universities for a whole month.

Since Moscow’s policy once again turned towards Daoud’s support, the Afghan army masterly prepared by the outlaw factions of the communist party, assisted decisively the prince for the success of the movement that de-throned his cousin, King Zahir Shah in July 1973. Daoud abolished monarchy

and declared Afghanistan a Republic. The new regime’s singularity was that even though it was not communist, it was depended almost exclusively on the very strong leftist movement, given that the two factions of the communist party had loyal members in key positions in the army [16] and the civil service. Indeed, a large number of military officers were members of the Communist Party, or pro-Soviet, who considered that Afghanistan’s progress could be achieved through the financial and technocratic support of the neighbouring superpower. To Moscow’s satisfaction many of them, as the army played the determinant role in seizing of power, gained appointments in the new Cabinet [17] ensuring the influence of Kremlin in the internal affairs of the country. However, Daoud fearing the increasing Soviet influence that would eventually lead to his overthrow by the two factions of the PDPA, started to gradually remove the leftist members of the Cabinet, moving them to less sensitive posts [18].

During his first service (1953-1963) as a Prime Minister Daoud played a significant role for the creation of the developmental policy in Afghanistan with assistance of the Soviet Union and the five year plans that he introduced. This time he put in action a project of structural, social and economic reforms, from the early days. Among others these reforms included agricultural subsidies, modernization of the tax system, eradication of corruption in the public sector, salary increases, reduction of unemployment, democratization of public life etc.

As it was natural the reforms policy found opposite the conservative social Islam circles, khans and the religious class of ulamas and mullahs which enjoyed benefits during the monarchy, resulting to the beginning of the sporadic energetic activities. The first large uprising was in 1975 by the Islamic Fundamentalists, represented by the party Islamic Association [19]. This was a hard to ignore sign for Daoud, who begun considering to change his internal and

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17 “Three of the pro-Soviet military officers (Pacha Gul Wafadar, Faiz Mohammed and Abdul Hamid Mohtat) quit the army after the coup and joined Daoud’s first Cabinet as ministers…” Ibid., p. 57.
18 Daoud was extremely cautious as far as the Ministry of Interior was concerned, and hence, the Minister of Interior Pazhawak, who had played an important role in the coup, was downgraded to Minister of Education. Furthermore, he transferred all the Parchamis of the Ministry (160 in total) to rural districts, removing his anxiety in this way. Ibid., p. 61.
external policy in order to consolidate his power among the Afghan population. Hence, he removed his pro-Soviet Ministers, at a faster rate than before, and replaced them with others favourable to the khans. Furthermore, in the midst of the turbulence he summoned the Loyah Jirga in 1977 to approve a constitution, which it did, legitimising him as president for seven years [20].

In his external policy, as early as 1974, he started to loosen the relations with Soviet Union and come closer to the Arab countries. In July 1974 a development agreement was signed with Iran, which involved finance of transportation projects of total value $1billion [21]. Daoud also obtained loan commitments for a seven year plan from Iran which promised Afghanistan $2billion, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Libya, while he assigned the training of the Afghan police to West Germany.

This turnaround troubled not only the factions of the communist party, but Moscow as well which hastened the developments as they believed Daoud would restore the old status quo. After the fall of monarchy in 1973, Kremlin esteemed that it was standing before a historical opportunity: the political reformation of the neighbouring neutral country of Afghanistan, after centuries, in a Soviet satellite, an opportunity it did not want to miss. As a result to Daoud’s turnaround, the Soviets made the best of the geometrical increasing public discontent and the increasing political instability using the channels of Khalq and Parcham. Furthermore with their extensive mediation the two factions of the communist party were reunited in July 1977; however they remained separate in the army. In response, Daoud commenced a systematic purge of active communists and applied police measures to suppress the demonstrations and protests directed by the PDPA. A catalytic fact was the murder, by Islamic Fundamentalists, (the murder also alleged to have been committed by the police) in April 1978 of Dr Khybar, a prominent member of the PDPA, editor of Parcham and a professor at the University of Kabul, key actor in the reuniting of the two factions of the Communist Party. The Communist Party took advantage of a public anger caused by Khybar’s murder and it directed an unexpectedly large demonstration for his funeral. In response, Daoud turned against the heads of the Communist Party (Taraki, Karmal, Amin) who were imprisoned. However, he did not succeed to prevail and was murdered along with his family by a coup d’etat, which was the result of the cooperation of the reunited PDPA and Moscow on 27 of April.

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20 Ibid., p. 13.
The revolutionary government abolished the Democratic Republic and established the Socialist Republic of Afghanistan. As the Khalqis played the primary role in the coup, Taraki assumed the Presidency of the state, that of the Revolutionary Council and maintained his position of the General Secretary of the PDPA, while Karmal and Amin served as his deputies. The new government was quick to restore the relations with the Soviet Union, making one giant step forward signing on 5 December 1978 the famous Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation, which among others stated: "The High Contracting Parties, acting in the spirit of the tradition of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness, as well as in the spirit of the UN Charter shall consult each other and, by agreement, take appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence, and territorial integrity of the two countries………In the interests of strengthening their defense capacity, the High Contracting Parties, shall continue to develop cooperation in the military field on the basis of appropriate agreements concluded between them" [22]. Furthermore, within the framework of implementation of the agreement, Taraki increased the number of Soviet advisors from 2,100 before the coup to approximately 5,000, while the 3,000 were military advisors. These advisors operated as a state within a state, since were empowered to such a degree that: "no significant decision was made, no important order issued in either the civilian ministries in Kabul or the Afghan Armed Forces without the clearance of Soviet advisors. The advisers had obtained the authority to hold up orders until they counter-signed them" [23].

As far as the function of the government was concerned, initially the modern Communist triumvirate attempted to preserve a balance in the allocation of power in the first Cabinet. However, in a short time the old conflict between the two factions was reinvigorated. The most thunderous Khalqi move took place in November 1978 when the Central Committee of the PDPA unseated from the Revolutionary Council and the Central Committee Parchamis such as Nur Ahmad Nur, Sultan Ali Kishtmand, Anahita Ratebzad and Babrak Karmal, with conspiracy charges. Amidst the political upheavals, in March 1979, Amin, who had actually designed the subversion plan, ascended second in the government as Prime Minister and he undertook the leadership of the Afghan army, the Ministry of Interior including the Security Department of AGSA (Department for Safeguarding the Interests of Afghanistan) and the

Afghan Police Forces (Sarandoy). In contrast to Taraki who was opposite to the extensive and bloody purges of the Parchamis, Amin begun a systematic activity towards this direction. In July 1979 the already unseated Karmal was transferred as ambassador in Czechoslovakia; a move that in addition to motives related to the contradiction of the two factions involved personal motives as well. Apart from the traditional breach in the Communist Party in time a new breach appear within the Khalq faction itself, which had as protagonists the two most prominent comrades of it Taraki and Amin, whose different approaches on a series of matters led the Afghan leadership to a split (a faction in the Khalq faction). Main difference was the fact that Taraki wanted closer relations with Moscow on the external policy level as well; to the extent that he agreed to a possible accession of Afghanistan to the Soviet Block. Knowing of course that this was not possible, he promoted a political stance within the Non-Aligned Movement, similar to that of Cuba [24]. On the other hand, Amin supported a totally uncommitted external policy, with purely pluralistic character. The disagreement on the utilization or not of Soviet forces for the suppression of the uprising in Herat in March 1979 is characteristic, whereas Taraki wanted a more active Soviet interference than the bombing of Herat, and Amin was extremely opposed to such a development [25]. It was a matter of time before a major contradiction took place. Intrigues were on the daily agenda as the two factions removed and expelled associates of the opponent. Moreover, during the summer of 1979 President Taraki, was desperately trying, under the tolerance if not the assistance of the Soviets, to dispose of his ambitious competitor, Amin. Indeed, Moscow, which favoured Taraki and Karmal, fearing subversion by anti-Soviet Amin, desired the reunion of the Party with Taraki Head of the State and the Party and Karmal Prime Minister and Deputy General Secretary. In the most peaceful scenario Amin and his supporters would be sent away on “diplomatic exile”. On 10-11 September 1979, a secret preparatory meeting took place in Kremlin, during Taraki’s return from a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana and Karmal secretly coming from Czechoslovakia, which was sealed with Brezhnev’s personal commitment for Taraki’s safety [26]. On 14 September an attempt was made against Amin’s life, who not only managed to survive but also to assume power on 15 September, after the announcement of Taraki’s “retirement”. On 10 October the obituary of Taraki was published who had allegedly died of ser-

25 Ibid., p. 34.
26 Ibid., p. 36-7.

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ious illness.

The Soviets, as it was natural, were displeased with the rise of Amin in power, both due to pushing aside Kremlin's favoured Karmal and Taraki, and as regards to the possibility of exerting independent policy by him. Even more, Brezhnev had taken the matter personally as he had personally guaranteed Taraki's safety. During the three months of Amin's government its relations with the Soviet Union were in constant crisis. His policy intended to receive and utilise financial, military and developmental aid from Moscow, without undermining Afghanistan's future as an independent state. Despite this obvious inconsistency with political reality, Amin tried to apply his believes. Indeed, he made continuous efforts to disengage the country from the Soviet chariot. One of his most important concerns was the country's dependence on the Soviet advisors. As he could not remove, he downgraded them taking away any authorities that Taraki's regime had given them. In the army, he removed pro-Soviet officials and replaced them with Western-educated Afghans.27 Furthermore, he tried to put an end to Afghanistan's loss of income from the sale of natural gas to the Soviet Union. As the sale price was far below the international rate he asked the Soviet government to readjust it. On the other hand he asked for economic and military assistance in order to promote Afghan developmental process and to deal with the armed uprisings in the whole country respectively, believing that for Moscow the cost of denying him assistance would be much greater than providing it. In fact, the Soviets were “obligated” to support the new government firstly due to the obvious Communistic comradeship, and secondly in fear of American political penetration which was attempted systematically, mainly through the American secret services who were domiciled in neighbouring Pakistan. However, despite the large amounts of military material [28] along with the financial and technical assistance that Moscow provided all successive Afghan regimes including Amin's, the situation was getting out of hand, and the uprisings were threaten-

27 Ibid., p. 42.
28 Among thousands pieces of portable equipment of RPG's, flamethrowers and light weaponry, the military assistance, until 1978, included 659 tanks, most of them the old model of T-54-55; 867 APC, (87 BMP and 780 BTR); 1,919 artillery guns; a significant number of MIG-17s,-21s aircrafts and Mil-Mi HIND-24 combat helicopters. Giustozzi Antonio, War, Politics and society in Afghanistan, 1978-92, Georgetown University Press, 2000, pp. 272-74. Sources: (1) Gai and Snegirev, Vtorzhenie, p.72, (2) Gareev, Moya poslednyaya voina, p.85, 192, 310-11 (3) TsK KPSS, “O doplonitel” noi postavke spet-simushestva Respublike Afganistan, 1989, in Sowjetische Geheimdokumente, pp. 606, 608.

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ing Kabul by December [29].

From April 1978 onwards the Afghan Marxist regimes proved their typical inefficiency to cope with military revolt, permanently pleading for Soviet military assistance [30]. Finally, as the increasing instability reached the Soviet borders, a combination of strong motives triggered by the geopolitical competition between USA-Soviet Union, persuaded Kremlin for the "necessity" of the invasion, following Brezhnev’s doctrine, whose preliminary phase was executed on the 24 December, while the main bulk of the invasion took place from 27 of December onwards, putting a temporary end to the anxiety of the Soviet leadership.

3. Conclusions

It is evident that the Afghan-soviet relations during the Cold War period were characterized by a significant degree of asymmetry. Indeed, the Afghan leaders were brought out of their dilemma position, since the United States demonstrated, at best, indifference for the development of expedient bilateral relations with Kabul, opting Pakistan as its strategic regional partner after the Second World War with the subsequent enlisting of Persia later on. Consequently, provided that the absolute priority was the rapid modernization of the country, the only realistic option was the establishment of close relations with Moscow. On the other hand, Kremlin, without any hesitations, expressed an escalated interest and implemented the appropriate penetration policy. It is quite remarkable, how Moscow achieved the transformation of a conservative Muslim society and a traditional Monarchical political system state into a Peoples’ Democratic Republic with a remarkably massive popular base by the end of 1970s.

The Soviet plan comprised of a series of stages and tactics with ultimate goal the absolute dependence of the Afghan state in all sectors of the economy and military on Moscow, with natural result its incorporation in the broader Socialist Alliance following the model of Cuba. Such an event would entail multiple

29 Even though Amin had managed to suppress most of the uprisings, he was the target of multiple fires from diverse opposition groups. As a founding member of the PDPA he had great range of political opponents from Maoists to Mullahs and fanatic Islamists; as a veteran Khalqi the Parchamis; and even Khalqis themselves who blamed him for the murdered of their leader Taraki.

30 It must be pointed out that since March 1979 till the end of the same year, when Soviet Union responded to the Afghanistan's appeal, the leadership of Afghanistan (Taraki and Amin successively) had asked for the sending of Soviet troops approximately 15 times, aiming at the confrontation of internal and external "anti-revolutionary" powers.
gains for Moscow on international diplomatic level (Afghanistan was member of the non-allied states), on geostrategic regional level in South Asia as well as in that of Grand Strategy since the embrace of the country constituted a great step for Moscow towards the Warm Seas. Consequently, the Soviet Union, exploiting the absence of any strategic opponent, began attempting, from the first post war decade, to gradually control, through economical, technological and constructional aid the basis of the Afghan economy. Indeed, a series of Treaties and Agreements between the two states gave in one hand the opportunity to the Afghan State, to spring its developmental course with unprecedented rates, and on the other the opportunity to Moscow to achieve strategic penetration in the fundamental structure of Afghanistan. This was further exacerbated by the dispatch of soviet advisors and specialists in Afghanistan, in order to convey their know-how and organise the Afghan infrastructure in accordance with the soviet standards. In time, Kremlin further expanded its scope of influence as military aid programs, dispatch of military supplies and equipment and training programs for Afghan Officers began to take place fulsomely, launching the number of soviet advisors to thousands. Having taken advantage of the idleness and passivity of the Afghan leadership, Moscow established a monopolistic relationship with the country, a fact that gave it the ability not only to influence but also to intervene in many occasions in the political scenery of Afghanistan. Even more, after the assumption of power by Daoud with the decisive support of the Communist Party of Afghanistan in 1973 and the transition of the political system from Constitutional Monarchy to Republic with Daoud as President, Moscow begun to act uncontrollably in exercise direct pressure in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. This resulted in Daoud’s short stay in power, as in April 1978 the Communist Party overthrew him with the contribution of the Army, within which the Soviet Advisors and KGB agents had successfully labored for almost three decades. It is a fact, that the successive transitions of the political system which resulted in the People’s Democratic Republic in 1978, along with all related transformations in the Afghan society towards this direction, gave the impression, by the end of 1970s, that Moscow had achieved its long term goal to encompass Afghanistan in its sphere of influence. However, the lack of an established cohesion within the Communist Party that was tormented by internal discords and antagonism between the two traditional factions, even from the early stages of its establishment, and the extremely successful insurgency of the Mujahidins did not permit the smooth implementation of the soviet model in the country resulting in the drastic reaction by Kremlin in order to safeguard the fruits harvest it had cultivated over the past thirty years.

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Map 2. Afghanistan in 1893; 50 years before Pakistan’s National Independence. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin

The flag of Pastunistan. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin

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Map 3. Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderline and Pastunistan. Source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at Austin