

## **The Impact of Global Political Changes on the Afghan State and Society in the 1970s.**

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### **Abstract:**

In this paper an attempt is made to highlight the global political changes and its impact on political, social and economic cross currents of Afghan society and state. Why the Afghans were expecting a change from their own rulers in the wake of global socio, economic and political changes and how the inward looking fragmented Afghan society was further divide on ideological lines gave birth to more fusion and fission at micro and macro level. In a much broader context and in a wider perspective, however, the present study will encompass the following main issues: Why the tug of war was continued for constitutional rights between the public and palace in 1970s and why the 1964 constitution failed to address the main issues twisting around the tribal society and the educated elite vis-a vis the traditional monarch in Kabul and how geo-political crosscurrents in the surrounding region of Afghanistan and the intricacies of Pak-Afghan relations determine the parameters of covert and overt political activates with their own publications trying to change a canvas in the traditional tribal society of Afghanistan for their own political gains.

Keywords: Daud Khan, PDPA, Pakhtunistan, Sardar Daud, *Khalq*, *Parcham*, Noor Muhammad Taraki, Babrak Karmal

### **Introduction:**

Internationally, the mid sixties were the most successful years for the Soviet diplomacy, particularly in South and Central Asia. The Tashkent Declaration (January 10, 1966) brought peace between Pakistan and India and earned the role of peace makers for the Soviets. The U.S action in Vietnam, its support to Israel, improved relations between Pakistan and Moscow, followed by President Ayub's visit to the Soviet Union in September 1967, all augured well for the Soviets. All liberation movements in Africa looked to the Soviets as their savior against the White minority rule. The fifty years of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1967 had literally earned for the Soviet an

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honorable place in the comity of nations. Their friendship treaties with Afghanistan and the increasing demands of the Afghan public compelled the rulers and educated class in Afghanistan to reconsider once more their own priorities nationally and internationally. In 1966-67, the Afghan foreign trade with the Soviet bloc was between 35 to 40 percent and with India and Pakistan 20 and 40 percent respectively with the free currency areas.(1)

The reaction of September, 1965 War between India and Pakistan and elections in Afghanistan, however began a new era in Afghan politics, a genuine attempt to create a constitutional monarchy with at least a theoretical emphasis on parliamentary procedures. The members of the parliament were satisfied at least with their legitimate constitutional powers, while the tribal *Maliks* and Khans were disappointed with the new role of the members as they thought them a check on their authority. Meanwhile, the educated and disgruntled elements had many questions for the political, economic and social development but they had no answer and they had no time to wait for, and ultimately joined different parties and groups (though unlawful) for the achievement of their goals or at least to satisfy their intellectual thirst and ego.(2) As the educated Afghan wrestled with the new concepts of government, four general ideological positions emerged among the informed electorate: Traditionalists wished to retain Afghan culture under firm, traditional Islamic principles; adopters wanted somehow to weld western technology and managerial practices with Afghan culture and Islamic teachings; democrats looked forward to a democratic republic and put their faith in following western models more directly; and Marxists- Leninists were by definition committed in theory to eventual revolutionary overthrow of any non-Communist government.(3)

In the 1969 parliamentary elections in Afghanistan, only two leftists Babrak Karmal (*Parchami*) and Hafizullah Amin (*Khalqi*) were elected to the *Wulusi Jirga* as independent candidates, while in 1965 elections they had four members namely, Karmal, Anahita, Noor Ahmad Noor and Fazanul Haq Fazan. The leftists realized that they were unable to win a substantial number of seats in a lawful and democratically elected parliament consequently they resorted to obstructionist tactics in the parliament and outside. And the left was partly responsible for the paralyzing of that body during the Constitutional period.

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Among all political parties that mushroomed in the 1960's the PDPA came to prominence as an instrument of Soviet policy and later played an important part in the Communist takeover in Afghanistan. In 1969, N.M.Taraki published secretly two papers namely *Rahnuma* and *Junbish* which were mostly distributed at night(4) According to credible accounts it was also about the same time that the Soviets seriously embarked on subverting the military of Afghanistan.(5)

After Daud's fall, the Moscow probably came to perceive the Afghan state as increasingly leaning towards the West. Kabul's growing rapprochement with Iran, less emphasis on the Pakhtunistan issue and the promotion of a liberal, western style parliamentary system may have strengthened that perception. Undoubtedly the "Soviets hoped that their new tactics would enhance their ability to deal with any further development in Afghanistan".(6)

During the Constitutional period (post-1964), economic development was marred considerably and economic assistance to Afghanistan from the two super powers decreased from 1963 to 1973.It seemed that with the demise of the Cold War, the super powers had lost much of their interest in competing in Afghanistan. Despite this negative development, Kabul remained on good terms with both, although Soviet support for Pakhtunistan had become less pronounced and more ambivalent.

There was a severe drought and subsequent famine extending from the winter of 1967-70 through 1971 followed by heavy snowfall and flooding in 1971-72. The hunger related deaths were round about 8, 0000.(7) Foreign aid was declining throughout the world as well as in Afghanistan, while the expectations of the new generation were rising.

The Indo-Pakistan War in 1970 and the separation of East Pakistan posed many problems to Pakistan and Afghanistan. In the war, Indo-Afghan trade and transit and U.S aid was affected and politically the Pakhtunistan advocates both in Afghanistan and Pakistan saw new chances and new opportunities for the achievement of their ends. The deteriorated economic situation was exploited by active political forces particularly the left. Taraki published a series of articles in the paper *Piam-i-Wijdan* with the title *Zindagani-i-Lenin* (life of Lenin) in 1970 with the pen name Sor Gul.(8) He along with his friends concentrated on the educational institutions. Hafizullah Amin was entrusted with the task to work in Rahman Baba and

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Khushal Khan Khattak *Lycee*, where most of the tribal students were admitted. They were using a code word "*Bashar*" (Man) for their identification.(9)

The increasing activities of the leftist elements were noticed by religious circles and On April 27,1970 some *Ulama* along with 30 conservative members of the *Shura* forwarded two petitions in the *Ulushi Jirga* (Lower House).The first petition incorporated the following two instances of anti Islamic activities:(i) The Mayor of Kabul with instructions from the Ministry of Information & Culture planned to celebrate the birth anniversary of V.I.Lenin on April 25,1970 in Kabul; (ii) two movie films namely, *Be-Khuda* and *Yousuf Zulakha* had been showing in the Cinema houses. In the Polytechnic institution, another movie *Khuda Neest* (there is no God) was displayed. In another petition they stated that the government had a program (a) to train Afghan youth in the Communist and atheist countries abroad;(b) licenses were provided to the drinking, dancing and gambling clubs;(c) encouragement was accorded to local journalists by preaching atheism and distributing foreign literature on this subject liberally;(d) corruption and nepotism were high in the society and were carried out publicly.(10)

Maulvi Muhammad Nabi alias Barki Bark read out in the house the ill reputed poem of Hassan Bariq Shafi published in weekly *Parcham* on April 22, 1970.The poem was composed on V.I.Lenin under the heading *Shipur-i-Inqilab* (The Revolution Bugle) wherein Lenin had been awarded the status and position of a prophet. These protests and presentation of the *Ulama* were followed by anti-Communist street agitations reaching their climax in the last week of April. The demonstrators were led by orthodox *Mullahs* of Kabul. Muhammad Ibrahim Mujaddidi and Prof. Ghulam Muhammad Niazi were among the major instigators.(11) They demanded inter-alia the reestablishment of the *Purdah* system and an end to female secular education. The leftists and Marxists took it as an insignificant attempt and instead they launched a country rally. This time in the rally 5,000 women also participated against the *Mullah's* demands for *Purdah*. The reaction to such female demonstration was that several were shot; others were burned by acid in different places.(12)

The ideological left, aided by a discontented student population; the traditional elite, at once distrustful of government and demanding more services from government; and the bulk of the educated elite, torn by personal rivalries reinforced each other and produced a chronic instability through the successive governments of Dr.Yousuf,

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Maiwandwal, Etemadi, and Dr.A.Zahir. For the most part, all these groups, even the Marxists, have accepted the ideological basis of the constitution but they have been unable to make it work in practice. This instability made it necessary for the supporters of the constitution to resort to extra constitutional means in order to accomplish anything.

The U.S Embassy in Kabul observed in 1971 that in the previous four years leftists "have made important gains among students and the urban oriented lower level professionals" especially high school teachers. It added:

"...In sum, we are confronted with a real and present danger that the left will preempt control over the politically conscious youth and the disenchanting"(13)

By 1972, the U.S state Department's report estimated 300 to 500 Communists in Afghanistan, "divided among five separate factions (*Khalq, Parcham, Shula-i- Jawaed, Seetmi-Milli* and *Kargarn*), all illegal as political parties and some with only a tenuous connection with international Communism". The report further said: "the main emphasis in recruitment... seems to be among students and teachers".(14) Between 1965 and 1973 the PDPA was able to organize more than 2,000 meetings, demonstrations and strikes.(15)

In the last decade of the Afghan monarchy, the American interest diminished to a considerable extent in Afghanistan. Robert G. Neumann, the U.S ambassador (1966-1973) in Kabul prepared a policy review for the State Department in June 1971, which partly states: " For the United States, Afghanistan has at the present limited direct interest; it is not an important trading partner, it is not an access route for U.S trade with others, it is not presently...a source of oil or scarce strategic metals;...it does not provide us with significant defense,...However, Afghanistan ,has important interest...in large part derived from its strategic location between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent". The review further states that "the U.S has long understood that Afghanistan has had little choice but to have close relations with U.S.S.R. Among the factors are: the long border. the slowly developing desire to transfer the economy, the concomitant need for massive economic assistance, the desire to have modern military force"(16)

R G.Neumann listed additional factors that worked in favor of the Soviet Union: (i) The Soviets were Kabul's largest trade partner, (ii) Kabul owed large debts to Moscow, (iii) Soviet agents had infiltrated the Afghan government, (iv) Afghanistan is dependent on Soviet arms, (v) Soviets exercised strong influence over the Afghan

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educational system, especially the higher education,(vi) operated a large exchange program for military and civilian students as well as the rest of Soviet propaganda apparatus existing in Afghanistan. The result of all this was that ` although the Royal Government of Afghanistan may not do everything the Soviets wish it to do, it is rare that the RGA does what the Soviets strongly wish it not to do'.(17)

When the 1969 elections failed to produce a more decisive second parliament and the leftists failed to secure parliament seats they consequently gave way to covert political activities. The leftist elements once again secretly collaborated with Daud Khan, who was already in touch with young military officers trained mostly in Soviet Union. The major reason for their collaboration was that left had failed to gain power through the ballot box, while Daud was barred by constitution of 1964 to participate in politics, so logically for both the only way open for gaining political power was nothing but a coup. Their political meetings developed into a conspiracy for a coup d'état, accelerated first, by government's weak response to the drought; secondly, a new deadlock between the legislature and the executive over a civil service bill, a provision that required fluency in both the official languages, Pashtu and Dari(18) aroused ethnic and linguistic tension; thirdly, Dr.Muhammad Zahir's resignation from Prime Ministership and the new P.Minister Muhammad Musa Shafiq Kamavi's (December 7,1972) agreement with Iran over the water of Helmand river for which he was described maliciously by opposition as *Abb-Farosh* or water seller;(19) fourth, Zahir Shah's visit of Moscow and unacceptability of Kosygin plan for "collective security agreement";fifth, disintegration of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 raised the status of Daud Khan and other protagonists of Pakhtunistan and lastly the allegedly rightist coup attempts under Muhammad Hashim Maiwandwal and Kings uncle Shah Wali and former Prime Minister Muhammad Yousuf.(20)

Eminent American scholar Prof. Dupree in his report about Afghanistan in July 1971 states:" In sum, Afghanistan's experiment in democracy is not yet dead, but it is seriously ill....continued legislative inactivity, executive non leadership, and repeated violations of the 1964 constitution by the power elite may render this document as useless as its 1931 counterpart". He further added:

"...revolution would seem no more than a decade away...within five Years, the first abortive coup may occur. Most likely, it will emanate from the idealistic ,unrealistic left...for two reasons: to test the reactions of the military and the real strength of the monarchy; to

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eliminate their less practically oriented leftist comrades...the final spasm of revolution will probably come from a coalition of Soviet trained military officers and Western trained (primarily American) generalist administrators. The success or failure of this movement will depend largely on who controls the draftee army, air force, police and gendarmerie..."(21)

Dupree prediction about the constitution and the coup in Afghanistan came true within few years with Daud Khan's take over in 1973.

Robert G. Neumann, the U.S Ambassador in Kabul, saw the situation in 1972 as the king's 'crisis of Survival'. He states that "for the king and leadership group, survival is the first objective with all other goals considered secondary...the survival of the present government for more than another year is problematical".(22) Ambassador very words proved prophetic within thirteen months with the fall of King Zahir, and with him, the Afghan constitution and the monarchy.

The King's half-hearted advance towards constitutional monarchy failed to satisfy the rising political aspirations of the educated youth. The resultant climate of despair and drift paved the way for Daud's second successful but bloodless coup d'état in July 1973, against the King, who was in Italy for medical treatment.

Daud Khan declared Afghanistan a republic and himself became the founder president and Prime Minister of the new republic. He abrogated the constitution (1964) and dissolved the parliament. He promised to introduce 'basic reforms and real democracy' to serve a majority of the people and friendship with all nations, although he noted "differences over the Pakhtunistan issue" with Pakistan.(23)

The theory that Daud captured power with the help of Soviet Union is still debatable. However, Afghan diplomat like Abdul Samad Ghaus wrote in 1988: "...I am, however, convinced, after years of association with Daud and his colleagues, that the coup of 17 July, 1973 was definitely not a Russian initiative. It was an Afghan venture in pursuit of purely Afghan aims".(24) It is a fact that Daud came to power with the support of leftist elements like *Parchamis* and Soviet trained army officers. The Parcham group of the PDPA led by Babrak Karmal extended its full support to Daud.(25) *Parcham* immediately set up its headquarters in Kabul's Spinzar hotel. This was the only instance of a political group operating openly after the 1973 coup.

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Even the staff of this government owned hotel was recruited from amongst *Parcham* sympathizers.(26) About 160 ardent youth cadres of this party were sent out to rural areas as district officers, police officers, directors and provincial Governors.(27) Half of the ministers of Daud were closely associated with *Parcham* as was the chief of his bodyguard, Zia Muhammad Zia. Some important leftist ministers of Daud's cabinet were: Dr. Niamatullah Pazhwak, Dr. Muhammad Hassan Shariq, Jilani Bakhtani, Syeed Abdullah, Faiz Muhammad Masud, Pacha Gul Wafadar and Muhammad Khan Jalaler. It is believed by high Afghan circles that Jalaler was the man planted by K.G.B who passed on all information to the Soviets about Daud's every move. Three of the pro-Soviet military officers, P.G.Wafadar, F.M.Masud and Abdul Hamid Mohtat quit the army after the coup and joined Daud's cabinet, while four others Abdul Qadir, Aslam Watanjar, Syeed Muhammad Gulabzoy and Sherjan Mazdoor Yar continued their career as soldiers. All these played a key role in the coup that placed Daud in power and the one that later deposed him.

In the first few months following the coup, it was reported that Karmal and his principal lieutenants (Khyber and Anahita) formed a kind of subcommittee of the Government of Afghanistan's central committee, which approved on all senior appointments in the government. During the same period, there were reported defections from the *Khalq* to the *Parchamis*, who appeared to be coming out on top.(28)

On 19th July 1973, only two days after the coup, a clandestine radio station describing itself as 'Radio Pakhtunistan' started broadcasting propaganda campaign for Pakhtunistan. The Afghan press and news media also stepped up propaganda referring to the Frontier and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan as the Northern and Southern occupied areas. Meanwhile, the Baluch Peoples Liberation Army (a self proclaimed Marxist organization) and the Popular Front for Armed Resistance operated(29) in the remote desert border area along Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Several other semi military organization, such as the *Pakhtun Zalmai*, a militant organ of National Awami Party of Khan Abdul Wali Khan (NWFP, present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), *Baluch Verna*, *Baluch Dehi Muhafiz* organized by leaders like Attaullah Mangel, Khair Bakhish Marri and Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo in Baluchistan appeared. This situation developed mainly as a result of the dismissal of the coalition government of NAP and JUI (*Jamiat-ul-Ulma-i-Pakistan*) in Baluchistan by the central

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government of Pakistan People's Party and the protest resignation of NAP-JUI government in North West Frontier Province.

Pakistan accused the Afghan government of training up to 15,000 Baluch and Pakhtun guerrillas for a 'Peoples War'.(30) The Afghan government countered it by alleging that Pakistan was involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the Daud government.(31) Besides diplomatic venture against Pakistan, the Afghan government allegedly spread a net-work of terrorist activities inside Pakistan. In the summer of 1974, Abdul Wali Khan stated that "since the ballot had not come to the rescue of the people, the bullet will have to settle the issue as an alternative".(32)

On the other hand, Shah of Iran was worried over the increasing insurgency in Baluchistan along the Iranian border. He offered his good services for mediation between Pakistan and Afghanistan but his peace efforts suffered a setback, when in February, 1974 Hayat Muhammad Khan Sherpao, a provincial minister (NWFP) and close aid of Z.A.Bhutto, was blown up with a time bomb in the history department of the University of Peshawar. As a result, Bhutto banned NAP, arrested its leaders and seized its assets. As a further step, Bhutto established contacts with both extreme left and right wing elements in Afghanistan.

It was Pakistan's assistance which enabled Gulbaden Hikmatyar and others as well as *Seetmi-Milli* activists to start minor activities in Wardak, the Panjsher valley and Badakhshan respectively. Pakistan was reportedly responsible for bomb blasts in Jalalabad and Kabul.(33)

A large number of supporters of the *Seetmi-Milli*, *Shula-i-Jawaed*, *Hizbi-Islami* (led by Gulbaden Hikmatyar), *Jamiat-i-Islami* (led by Burhanudin Rabani) and *Harakat-i-Islami* (led by Maulvi Muhammad Nabi) began to move across to Pakistan. Afghan government arrested some old opponents like Dr. Muhammad Yousuf, Musa Shafiq and M.H. Maiwandwal along with forty four persons(34) like ex- General Khan Muhammad of Ningrahar, ex- General Abdul Razaq, Zarghun Shah, Safiur Rahman Shinwari of Ningrahar and Arif Shinwari of Landi Kotal.(35) On October 20, 1973 it was publicised through government press that Maiwandwal 'the traitor' had committed suicide.(36) Both *Parcham* and *Khalq* supported the government action. Hafizullah Amin later on disclosed that "our party men discovered eleven nascent coups against Daud regime and informed him. All these coups were suppressed at the very outset by Daud. The

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main reason was that we wanted to eradicate the reactionary elements in the army to pave the way for PDPA's political take over".(37)

Bhutto's visit of Moscow in October 1974, and Iran-Turkish efforts for Pak-Afghan rapprochement culminated in Bhutto's visit of Kabul in June 1976.

Two important initial decisions by Pakistan, both procedural and substantive had "unlocked the door to the kinds of negotiations that Kabul had wanted".(38) These decisions were: (a) the admission of Pakistan that a dispute existed between the two countries, and (b) its recognition that Afghanistan had the right to be concerned about the fate of the Pakhtuns living east and south of the Durand Line and, consequently that it could discuss the fulfillment of their aspirations with the Government of Pakistan. Pak-Afghan relations further improved when Daud visited Pakistan from 20 to 24 August 1976. But drastic change occurred when on June 9, 1977, Bhutto on his way back from Teheran had a stopover at Kabul where he told Daud Khan that he would release the political leaders of the N.W.F.P as soon as the confused situation returned to normalcy.(39)

In 1976, Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, the head of the National Security Council under Jimmy Carter administration devised the concept of regional influence and chose the Shah of Iran to play his role in Asia. The Shah himself was also interested to play a greater role in the Gulf and South Asia. In this connection, he was encouraged by America to extend financial aid to neighboring countries. Iran had already committed to Pakistan credits worth \$750 million and to Afghanistan \$ 50 million between 1973 and 1975. Washington persuaded Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Japan to grant more economic aid to Afghanistan. Eliot, the U.S ambassador in Kabul, even tried to persuade Daud to be 'truly non-aligned' and to realize that support for Pakhtunistan made him excessively dependent on the Soviet Union.(40) It should be noted that the Soviet bloc ended up putting far more aid into Afghanistan than the combined aid of Iran, Muslim countries and the West.

In 1977-78, momentous political changes took place in the regional scenario around Afghanistan. On 5th July, 1977 Bhutto government was overthrown by General Ziaul-Haq in Pakistan. In India Indira Gandhi regime ended in February, 1977 followed by government of *Janata* Party. In the same year in India and Afghanistan rival

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Communist factions(41) came together in response to changing realities in the two countries respective domestic politics.

By 1976, Daud appointed a special commission to prepare a draft constitution and in January 1977, it was approved by *Loya-Jirga*. The new constitution provided for a unicameral parliament (*Milli-Jirga*). Daud called for the appointment of a new cabinet, and the *Parcham* and leftist elements hoped that they would be given due share. Instead Daud Khan "reverted to the behavior of an old tribal Khan. He appointed friends, sons of friends, sycophants, and even collateral members of the deposed royal family".(42) It has been reported that Daud Khan sought the help of SAVAK in order to root out the Communist influence in Afghanistan.(43) He also reverted to the traditional constituencies of power by reviving the support of tribal and religious elite. So the coalition was broken and the honeymoon of the Left with Daud ended in fiasco.

Instead of introducing 'basic reforms' and true democracy in the country, Daud made it into a single party state: *Hizbi-Inqlabi-Milli* (National Revolutionary Party) and he himself nominated the members of its central committee. Six ministers resigned as a protest but on Daud's request withdrew their resignation.

Daud paid his last visit to Moscow in April 1977, and in 1978 he visited, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Saudi Arabia. But despite Daud's Western leaning his relations with Soviet Union were friendly if not cordial. The *Wall Street Journal* perceived Soviet influence in Afghanistan in September 1977 to be greater than that of any other power.(44) The volume of Soviet Afghan trade had been growing: in 1972 it reached 68.9 million rubles, in 1975, 132 million rubles and in 1976 it reached 154 million rubles.(45) By 1977, round about 37, 00 Afghan officers and non-commissioned officers had been trained in the Soviet Union in using the \$600 million worth of military hardware provided to the country by the USSR. Despite all this, if the Soviets took an unfavorable view of Daud's flirtations with the West and the Muslim world, there is nothing on record to confirm(46) it and the Soviet attitude toward Daud remain a mystery. Only Babrak Karmal confirmed where the Soviet interests lay. Responding to an Indian writer's question whether the Soviets wanted Daud overthrown, he answered bluntly, "Russia wanted that there should be revolution here".(47)

Internally, Daud tried to reduce the maximum influence of the left by liquidating all known *Parchamis* from the government and round

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about forty Soviet trained officers were removed from the army including those officers who helped him in seizing power in 1973. Karmal, Anahita and others were gently prevented from performing their respective duties. However, Daud was not able to eliminate all *Parcham* sympathizers and party members who occupied minor and sometimes sensitive posts in various departments and ministries. Yaqubi, one of Daud's security officers during his visit to Pakistan in 1976, confessed to a Pakistan writer in 1983, that "he began to work for Daud under instructions from the *Parcham* party".(48)

The same person became an adviser to Dr. Najib (1980?) and has been in charge of the ministry responsible for intelligence since 1986. Similarly, Major Zia Ahmad Zia, the Commander of the Presidential Guards was also *Parchami*, who occupied the post until the 1978 revolution.

All members of the *Parcham* party working with Daud were the secret informers of Karmal, and they kept informed the party authorities on all activities of Daud. Consequently, the internal and external policy of Daud compelled the *Parcham* to alienate itself from the government after the adoption of the *Qanoon-i-Assasi* or Constitution of 1977. *Parcham* rejected the constitution and Daud's call for all political groups to join together in his National Revolutionary Party. Both *Parcham* and *Khalq* factions of the PDPA, divided at the adoption of the 1964 constitution, were now prepared to reunite with the promulgation of 1977 constitution.(49) Both factions had already established their links with the likeminded parties outside Afghanistan in different countries. The *Khalq* had close contacts with the *Tudeh* Party of Iran, the Communist Party of Iraq and the *Mazador Kissan Party* (led by Afzal Bangish) of Pakistan. Even Taraki tried to form the *Khalq* Party in the tribal area, NWFP and Baluchistan. The *Parcham* established links with the Socialist Party of Australia, Pakistan's National Awami Party (led by Abdul Wali Khan) and the Communist Party of India. All these leftist parties and persons like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Ajmal Khattak(50) and Ehsan Tabri (leader of *Tudeh Party*) and Novokreshchikov, a representative of the Communist Party of Soviet Union played their respective conciliatory role in the *Khalq-Parcham* unity.

Karmal himself confirmed that "with the help of in-ternational friends and brothers the PDPA restored its unity".(51) The factional unity of the PDPA consisted of two parts: First the unity in connection with civilians, Secondly, the unity among the armed forces.(52) By

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this time, the *Khalq* strength in the Afghan army was round about two thousand officers.(53)

Hafizullah Amin, Salah Muhammad Zarie and Abdul Karim Mesaq were the leading *Khalqis*, who worked in the army, police and Palace Guards since 1975.(54)

To work in the armed forces for the revolution in a backward country like Afghanistan had many reasons. First of all, in Afghanistan political parties were illegal, weak and mostly clandestine, Secondly, the desired change of government was not possible through ballot and lastly, the lesson of armed coup and short cut was learned by the leftists from the Daud coup of 1973, and their (leftist) failure in 1969 elections. What the Afghan Marxists realized in 1977-78 was that their time was coming fast in the struggle for power that would ensue after the death of Daud, who was then 68, if they failed to achieve power through all means, their opponents would wipe them out. Meanwhile, the government's policies seriously threatened to injure the leftist movement as a political power, leaving the movement with "the choice of liquidation or revolution".

As the party central leadership was traditionally with the *Khalq*, so it was the *Khalq's* leaders, especially Taraki and Amin, who were mainly responsible for the turn of events in the last fortnight of April 1978. The total membership of the party as claimed by Amin in 1979, was between 7,000 and 10,000 before the revolution.(55) The Western diplomats in Kabul at the time estimated 5,000 to 10,000 members of the PDPA. Besides these members the party had many sympathizers and adherents in the educational institutions, army, police and other Soviet sponsored institutions like the Gas Technicum in Mazar Sharif and the Auto Technicum Kabul. According to the Central Statistical Department of Afghanistan, between 1957 and 1974 the Soviets helped train more than 60,000 skilled Afghan workers and 5,200 technicians at such projects.(56)

In early 1978, Daud tried to widen his commercial and economic possibilities by visiting in February to April, Libya, Turkey, Egypt, Yugoslavia, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In Pakistan, he met with President Muhammad Ziaul Haq on March 9 in Rawalpindi, in the meeting they agreed to abide by the agreement reached on the Pakhtunistan issue between Daud and Bhutto.(57) As a good will gesture, Zia released all Pakhtun and Baluch leaders.

Daud's government remained so much engrossed in political problems that socio-economic reforms were not properly taken in hand. The standard of living of the average citizen had not improved. His

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introduction of a mild degree of land reforms created resentment among the feudal lords and conservative tribal *Maliks*. By 1978, the base of his power coalition dwindled and he was almost friendless because he had incurred the displeasure not only of the Leftists but also of the religious establishment particularly the Muslim fundamentalists, students, intellectuals, army officers and some members of the upper classes. They all turned against him by the end of his rule. As the opposition to Daud increased, the reunited PDPA made plans to overthrow him.

In the meantime, the chance was provided, when a series of apparently political assassinations had occurred in Kabul. In the late August 1977, Inamul Haq Gran (a senior pilot of Afghan airlines(58)), who was once instrumental in a leading successful strike, was shot dead outside his apartment near Karmal house in Microiayan area of Kabul. This death was followed by the murder of Ahmad Ali Khoram, Political Minister of Planning in the Pakhtunistan Square on November 16, 1977. The assassin Muhammad Marjan (a provincial School teacher) confessed of a plot involving fifty four of his colleagues to assassinate Daud and his cabinet. The government simply announced that Marjan had been "trained outside" Afghanistan, but gave no further details.(59) The third assassination proved a death bell for Daud and his republic. On the night of April 17, 1978, Mir Akbar Khyber, a well known *Parcham* ideologue and once the editor of weekly *Parcham* was killed by persons still unknown. The incident set off a chain reaction that Daud's government could not handle properly. Daud professed to be shocked by the murder and the government laid the responsibility for the murder on the *Hizbi-Islami*.(60)

The PDPA organized a funeral procession in which round about 15,000 mourners took part, shouting anti- American and anti C.I.A slogans in front of U.S Embassy Kabul. The rally ended at Zarnigar Park in Sher-i-Nau.(61) It was addressed by Taraki and Karmal. Daud Khan informed Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Ajmal Khattak through government officials not to participate in the funeral procession, though they participated in the *Fateha* of Khyber.(62)

Nothing happened for one week after the funeral procession. A shaken Daud moved swiftly and arrested seven leftist leaders(63) while the bazaar rumors accounted for forty.(64) Unluckily, the crucial accident was that one of the last to be picked up (April 26) was

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Hafizullah Amin, but before his arrest he managed to contact Syeed Gulab Zoai, an Air Force officer through Faqir Muhammad Faqir, who further sent instructions to twenty army and air force officers, asking them to act. According to the official accounts about the revolution, Amin appointed Col. Aslam Watanjar as Commander of the Revolutionary Ground Forces and col. Abdul Qader as the leader of the Revolutionary Air Force. After the imprisonment of the party leaders, the fate of the revolution hung on the action of the Leftist officers of the Army and Air Force.(65)

On April 27 (6 o'clock), the Armoured Division led by Watanjar and Qadir's Air Force men seized strategically important places one by one and finally besieged the Presidential Palace. The Republican Guards after heavy fighting and tough resistance lost the ground. Revolutionary forces released Karmal and Taraki from the Interior Ministry. At 7:05 on the evening of the 27th Radio broadcast in Dari and Pashtu announced: "for the first time in the history of Afghanistan an end has been put to the sultanate of Muhammadzais. All power passed to the hands of the masses".(66) On April 28, Daud Khan along with his family was killed in the Palace.

Two days later, the republic of Afghanistan was renamed as the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), Constitution of 1977 was abrogated, Noor Muhammad Taraki became the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and *Sadri-Azam* (Prime Minister) and Babrak Karmal as Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Deputy Prime Minister while Hafizullah Amin assumed office as Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On May 4, 1978 Taraki, in his first news conference denied that the new regime was Communist, Socialist or pro Soviet. He asserted that his goal was a "national democratic" revolution. But on the other hand, speeches by party leaders were likewise full of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and praise to October Revolution, such as the following statement by Hafizullah Amin:

"... As the Great October Revolution shook the World and Commenced the downfall of Imperialism and left good example for proletariat movements in capitalist countries, so thus the glorious *Saur* (April) Revolution...also surprised and frightened imperialism...and became a shining example for the peoples in developing countries".(67)

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## Conclusion:

The global changes around Afghanistan paved the way for realization of the hopes, the dreams; the aspirations of the Afghans revolutionaries (both leftists and Rightists) for a change, revolution and complete break with the past were materialized with the end of Muhammadzai dynasty. But whether the April Revolution brought the expected change in the backward Afghan society after breaking the age-old traditional system of relationship between state and society? Why the revolution (or to its detractors the coup) and resistance in the form of international *Jehad* pushed the country into dark labyrinth of war, conspiracies and fragmentation of society is beyond the scope of this study.



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  39. Kabul Times, June 10, 1977.
  40. Selig Harrison wrote in the 'Washington Post' of May 13, 1979,"it was the Shah of Iran, not Leonid Brezhnev, who triggered the chain of events culminating in the overthrow of Muhammad Daud regime".Gupta op.cit. P. 178.
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heard this directly from Naim on the latter's return from Moscow; Gupta op.cit. p.20. According to US ambassador Neumann the fall of Daud had little to do with his foreign policy because: (i) Afghanistan always voted with the Soviet Union or the Non-Aligned Group in U.N, (ii) no Western activity was allowed in the northern part of Afghanistan, (iii) Soviet economic data was not disclosed to Western countries and they had no access to projects built by Soviets, and lastly Daud even supported the Soviet move for a Collective Security in Asia. See Arnold op.cit. P.48 quoted Berner, "Der Kampf Um Kabul" P.332 99: New Delhi, 3, no.24 (April 27-May 10, 1981) cited by Arnold, Two.op.cit.p.59.

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