

The Coup in Afghanistan and its Impact on Pakistan: 1973-1975

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In the middle of 1973, the situation was still in a flux when a *coup d'etat* in Afghanistan changed the whole aspect of the Pak-Afghan relations. On 17 July, while King Zahir Shah was away to Italy for medical treatment, his first cousin, brother-in-law and a former Prime Minister, Muhammad Daud Khan, staged a coup and proclaimed himself as the President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Apparently, the change seemed to be no more than a change in Pakhtoon aristocracy. In fact it had much deeper meanings and consequences. It was for the first time that the political parties had been involved in the change of the Government. The coup itself was the result of a number of internal and external factors going back to the 1960's. The most important of these was that the nine-year experiment in constitutional democracy in Kabul had not worked successfully. The prevailing tribal system, the high rate of illiteracy (nearly 93 percent) and extreme poverty and backwardness reminiscent of medieval age in certain areas had been the chief impediments.¹ The situation was compounded in the early seventies by the economic difficulties, especially by the amounting debt services, a steady decline in foreign aid and a severe drought in 1969-72. The concentration of power in the hands of the King, who ruled the country for nearly forty years, further caused frustration.

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1. Louis Dupree, "A New Decade of Daud" in *Field Staff Report*, Vol.xvii, No.4, July 1973, 4.

An impression had been created in a section of the Afghan bureaucracy that the King was moving away from the Soviet Union and was getting closer to the United States and as such as deviating from the traditional policy of non-alignment.² He was also trying to diffuse tension with his neighbours, especially Iran and Pakistan. He had almost settled the Halmand river water dispute with Iran and was playing down the Pakhtoonistan dispute with Pakistan in order to increase cooperation between the two countries.³ All this was disapproved by the Soviets. Therefore, it was assumed that the coup had been engineered by the Russians to hinder the Afghan King's tilt towards the West.⁴

The actual planning of the coup came about in the wake of the chaos of the 1969 elections. The irregularities in the conduct of elections must have convinced Daud that the constitutional experiment had failed.⁵ Daud was supported by a large number of the left wing young army, airforce and police officers. They had been trained and instructed under Daud's supervision in the early 1950's when he was the Commander of the Military Academy,⁶ and secondly, they thought that Daud would help to remove their frustrations due to slow promotions and other inequalities.⁷ This was true of officers in the civil services but the special prestige which he had given to the armed forces during his prime ministership and the fact that he had modernized and expanded the army, with the help of the Soviet Union, and endeared him to corps of officers. Moreover, the 'senior' officers were members of the Pakhtoon aristocracy and, therefore, they supported Daud's aggressive policy on Pakhtoonistan.⁸ Among the political parties, the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Party of

2. Mehrunnisa Ali, "The Attitude of the New Afghan Regime Towards its Neighbours", *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol.xxvi, No.3, 1974, 43.

3. *Ibid.*, 44.

4. Dupree, xviii, No.8, 1974, 3.

5. *Ibid.* 1.

6. *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi: 8 August 1973).

7. *Ibid.*

8. Beverley Male, *Revolutionary Afghanistan* (London: 1982), 52.

Afghanistan (PDPA) led by Babrak Karmal, had links with the Pakhtoon ruling class. The Parchamites found in the armed forces a fertile recruiting ground for their supporters as against the Khalq faction which concentrated its efforts on the masses. It was only a short step to an alliance between Daud, the Parcham and the military. For Babrak Karmal the alliance offered the possibility of speedy access to political power denied to the political parties under Zahir Shah's regime.⁹ Dupree claims that some Parchamites were central to the planning of the 1973 coup.¹⁰ Naturally, therefore, the Parchamite supporters were appointed to the Revolutionary Council and some even ministers. As many as one hundred and sixty other party members were appointed to the bureaucratic positions in the province. And though the Soviet complicity was suspected¹¹ there was very little evidence of direct Soviet involvement. Daud asserted that 'no outside hand was involved' in the revolution and that the coup had been brought about with the entire support of the 'Afghan intellectuals and youth, for economic reasons'.¹²

In his first post-coup broadcast, Daud singled out Pakistan as the only country with which Afghanistan had an 'unresolved dispute'.¹³ His 'emotional attachment'¹⁴ to the Pakhtoonistan issue may have something to do with the fact that his great great-grand father, Sultan Muhammad Khan, was the last Afghan governor of Peshawar until 1823, when he was elbowed out by the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh. Another reason of ill-will towards Pakistan in Yasin Rizvi's estimation is of a personal nature, dating back to the time

9. *Ibid.*, 53.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 August 1973, quoted in Rosemary Foot. "The Changing Pattern of Afghanistan's Relations with its Neighbours. *Journal of the Royal Society of Asian Affairs*, vol.xi, No.67, February 1980. 56. Also see *Dawn* (Karachi: 19 July 1973).

12. *Morning News* (Karach: 26 July 1973).

13. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual - 1974* (Kabul: Ministry of Information & Culture, 1974), 4.

14. Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, (New Jersey: 1980), 557.

when Daud was the Afghan Ambassador to India. Rizvi states that once when Daud was going to Kabul via Lahore he was searched at the airport by the Pakistan custom officials which he never forgot. Daud considered this an insult deliberately directed against him. Consequently, the Afghan Embassy was made to send a strong protest note to the Pakistan Government.¹⁵ His support for the Pakhtoonistan issue was also geared to obtaining more aid from the Soviets. But when the Soviet Union toned down its open support for Afghanistan on the Pakhtoonistan issue as a part of its policy to improve relations with Pakistan, Daud himself became a casualty. The latter could not, therefore, forget that his ouster in 1963 had been the result of Pakistan's rapprochement with the Soviet Union and Afghanistan.¹⁶ But more than that Daud was a practical politician. He was conscious of the domestic compulsions including ethnic diversity, tribal jealousies and religious opposition and needed an external play to keep national cohesion. He also knew that continuation of stable government under a Pakhtoon ruling elite depended upon the support of Pakhtoon segments in the population,¹⁷ principally in the elites within the intelligentsia, the technocracy and the army.¹⁸ By raising the Pakhtoonistan issue he could attract support from all the divergent elements. For many years Daud had been convinced that Pakistan was an artificial state and that centrifugal forces would eventually prevail and cause its dismemberment. If such a thing happened the Afghans would be in a position to assert their historical and legal claim over the trans-Durand Line Pakhtoos.¹⁹ Pakistan's instability after the 1971 crisis strengthened the belief that reduced in size and population it would soon fall apart.²⁰ Daud's re-emergence in the summer of 1973, as

15. Yasin Rizvi, *Afghanistan*. (Lahore: 1980), 76-77.

16. Shirn Tahir-Khali, *Soviet Moves in Asia* (Lahore, n.d.), 36.

17. Leon Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929*. (Ithaca: 1973), 15.

18. Poullada, "Pushtunistan: 'Afghan Domestic Politics and Relations with Pakistan'" in Alinslie T. Embree (ed.), *Pakistan's Western Borderlands*, 151.

19. *Ibid.*, 150-151.

20. Mehrunnisa Ali, *The Attitude of the New Afghan Regime*, 50.

the architect of the coup and his renewed emphasis on the Pakhtoonistan issue, complicated not only the Pak-Afghan relations but also affected the political situation in Pakistan. At the time of the Afghan coup, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was locked in a fight with the Opposition over the crucial problem of power-sharing under the new Constitution. It was generally believed that when the Opposition leaders signed the Constitution in April 1973, they were promised the resurrection of their majority governments in the Frontier and Baluchistan.²¹ But when this did not happen the Opposition launched a civil disobedience movement in the two provinces alleging that the central Government was discriminating against them.²² Consequently, several semi-military organizations, such as Pakhtoon Zalme, Baluchi Verna, Baluch Dehi Muhafiz organized by leaders like Wali Khan, Attaullah Mangel, Khair Baksh Marri and Ghus Bakhsh Bizenjo made their appearance. Wali Khan even threatened that Pakistan and Bhutto could not coexist and if one was to stay the other had to go.²³ Bhutto, on his part, asserted that the JUI-NAP leaders were opposed to him because he wanted to introduce modernization which could have affected the powers of the Sardars.²⁴ Bhutto had been able to destroy the JUI-NAP governments in the provinces but he could not eliminate the Opposition.²⁵ On the contrary, there was a marked increase in the strength of the insurgency in the Frontier and Baluchistan with the active help from Afghanistan. The dissident elements in the NAP under Ajmal Khattak were active in Kabul with the blessings of the new Afghan regime. The coordinated strategy of Kabul and the NAP could be judged by the propaganda from Radio Kabul the theme of which was 'let us unite to achieve the liberation of

21. Satish Kumar, *The New Pakistan*, (New Delhi: 1978), 45.

22. *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore: 13 June 1973).

23. *Newsweek* (New York: 10 August 1973).

24. Anwar Syed, "Pakistan and Its Neighbourhood: Pressure and Politics", *International Security Review*, IV, No.4, Winter 1979-80, 418.

25. For details see Sherbaz Khan Mazari, *A Journey to Disillusionment* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 239-55.

Pakhtoonistan by sword'.²⁶ On 19 July 1973, that is two days after the coup, a clandestine radio station describing itself as 'Radio Pakhtoonistan' came on the air. The Afghan press and news media also stepped up its propaganda referring to the Frontier and Baluchistan provinces as the northern and southern occupied areas. It was clear that the Afghan Government wanted to use the militant minority of dissident within the NAP. Significantly, Daud had made his very first speech in Pushto instead of Dari. He ensured that he had the attention not only of the Afghans but also that of the Pathans living on the Pakistan side of the Durand Line.

Once again the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan brimmed with tension. The Pakistan Government was conscious of the looming trouble but its reaction over the developments in Afghanistan was cautious. At the time of the coup, Bhutto was not in Pakistan. He was visiting Britain. From London Bhutto lamented that Daud's militant attitude towards Pakistan was a disturbing element in the situation. He was apprehensive that any fresh attempt by Afghanistan to stir up Pakistan's restive Pathan tribesmen might provoke 'a dangerous international confrontation'.²⁷ The Pakistani press labelled Daud's policy as short sighted. The *Dawn* of Karachi, for instance, criticised it as a basic misconception which could mar a relationship.²⁸ The *New Times* of Rawalpindi, editorially called it a 'sheer waste of time and energy on the part of Afghan rulers to keep blowing the Pakhtoonistan trumpet'.²⁹ The *Pakistan Times* stated that the Pushto-speaking Afghans realised that since Pakistan was their only outlet to South Asia any deterioration in relations was bound to have an adverse affect on their economic interests.³⁰ Yet, when on 21 July 1973 Ahmed Ali Popal, the Afghan Ambassador to Islamabad, formally requested the Pakistan Government to recognise the new Afghan Government, Bhutto

26. Pushto Broadcast – 1930 hours, 21 July 1973, Radio Kabul, quoted in 'Feature Service', Associated Press of Pakistan, Karachi, 1975, 15.

27. *New York Times*, 20 July 1973.

28. *Dawn*, 26 July 1973.

29. *New Times* (Rawalpindi), 26 July 1973.

30. *The Pakistan Times* (Rawalpindi), 27 July 1973.

gave no cause to complain to the new regime in Afghanistan. The very next day, on 22 July, Pakistan recognized the new regime. In spite of Pakistan's immediate positive response, Daud, in a press conference on 24 July, reiterated that the Pakhtoonistan issue was a 'reality'.³¹ Daud's insistence on the Pakhtoonistan issue which Pakistan believed had been amicably resolved after the Tehran Accord of 1963, was annoying to Bhutto. Therefore, he took a firm position. Addressing the Foreign Press Association in London, on 25 July, the President of Pakistan made it clear that the Afghan developments were entirely an internal affair but 'We have lived with... [the Pakhtoonistan issue] in the past. We also regard it as a threat to our integrity. If Afghanistan wants to create tension on the border we can take care of it'.³²

By August 1973, Bhutto's internal and external position had improved considerably. Externally, most of the Muslim countries had fallen in line with Pakistan. The Shah of Iran went to the extent of asserting that Iran would not allow any further disintegration of Pakistan.³³ Relations with Bangladesh had not yet improved but with India, Pakistan had been able to sign the Delhi Agreement which opened doors to a *detente* in South Asia.³⁴ Russia, which had played such a crucial role in the disintegration of Pakistan, was now willing to smooth the latter's wounds.³⁵ Internally, the new constitution, which had been introduced with the blessings of all the parties, had secured for Bhutto a new popular image. He was now the Prime Minister of parliamentary system of government with sweeping powers at his disposal. The result was that still Bhutto

31. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual*, 1974, 15. Also see Daud's address to the Nation on 23 August marking the 55th anniversary of the Independence Day, 48.

32. Z.A. Bhutto, *Speeches and Statements*, April 1973-August 1973, (Karachi: 1973), 170. Also see *Economist*, London, 28 July 1973.

33. *New York Times*, 20 July 1973. For details see Sher Baz Khan Mazari, 359-61.

34. Satish Kumar, *The New Pakistan*, 54.

35. Mohammad Ahsan Chaudhri, 'Pakistan and the Changing Pattern of Power Relations in South Asia', *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol.xxxi, No.1, 84.

could not stare straight into Daud's eyes and say that Pakistan was fully capable of meeting the situation.³⁶ And through Afghanistan continued to celebrate the Pakhtoonistan Day and the Afghan press led by the *Kabul Times*, continued to give the fullest support to the Pakhtoonistan issue,³⁷ its impact on Pakistan was negligible. The NAP supporters failed to spread disaffection among the tribes other than the Marri and the Mengal pockets of Baluchistan. On the other hand, the enormous economic development taking place in both the provinces spot lighted how fallacious the Afghan claims were. Daud's appeal to the Muslim Heads of State and government on the behalf of the 'oppressed Pakhtoons'³⁸ also did not seem to have touched a sympathetic chord. Yet, Daud continued to cling to his pet issue. In fact it was during his regime that a new meaning and shape was given to the 'Pakhtoonistan concept'. Now an equal emphasis was given to the Frontier and other constituents of the 'Pakhtoonistan' state i.e., the tribal belt, Baluchistan and parts of the Punjab.³⁹ Thus, it was hoped that seven million people of Pakhtoonistan, who had been separated by a colonial power from their father-land could be ultimately united.⁴⁰ In September 1973, Afghanistan, even utilized the non-aligned platform at Algiers to further its 'Pakhtoonistan' designs but Pakistan, which was then not a member, retorted promptly by lodging a strong protest.⁴¹ The Afghans countered, by alleging that Pakistan was involved in a

36. *Pakistan Extends Hands of Friendship to Afghanistan*, (Islamabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting., 1974), 4.

37. See, for instance, *Kabul Times*, 30 August 1973, *Foreign Press Digest*, No.96, 19 September 1973, 4627. The paper also published the proposed Pakhtoonistan red flag with two inches wide black strip around white circle over it showing rising sun behind the mountains. On the top of the circle 'Allah-o-Akbar' and 'Pakhtoonistan' below the circle was written. A special stamp was also issued on the occasion. Also see *The Afghanistan Republic Annual-1974*, 68-70.

38. Mehrunnisa Ali, 53.

39. Quoted in *Patriot* (New Delhi: 14 September 1973).

40. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual-1974*, 58.

41. *New Times*, 25 September 1973.

conspiracy to overthrow the Daud regime.⁴² Pakistan rejected the charge as baseless and warned the Afghan Government against its continued interference in its internal affairs.⁴³ In the months that followed the tension continued to build. The latest round of confrontation, it seems was the result of Afghan apprehensions about the impact of Bhutto's attempted reforms in Baluchistan. The proposed reforms covered a broad spectrum from the elimination of feudalism and introduce socio-economic changes to providing electricity, building new roads and setting up of schools and hospitals. The Afghan feared that a change in the status quo on its frontier would bring Pakistan pressure closer to the Afghanistan. The measures of welfare on one side of the Durand Line would put strains on Afghanistan to match similar reforms on the other side. This fear seemed to be at the root of the renewed acrimony between Kabul and Islamabad. In Pakistan the tribal people mostly welcomed the welfare amenities. The reforms were also disliked by the Pakistani feudal Sardars like Bughti, Mengal and Marri, who exploited the situation by dubbing the Government's efforts as Punjabi hegemony in their province. Intra-tribal animosities, especially between the Bughti, the Mengal and the Marri tribes complicated the situation further. In the Frontier the resistance to these 'encroachments' by the central Government was mainly due to the fear that effective control would end the lucrative alleged smuggling between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Though the Kabul Government repeatedly denied the charges,⁴⁴ it was a well known fact that the dissident Pakistani tribesmen were often given shelter and given the training by the Afghan authorities.⁴⁵ In fact Afghanistan had been a proverbial sanctuary for the disaffected people from the Subcontinent. Being a tribal society, Afghanistan Government was dependent on various groups for support in the power game in Kabul. As such, Daud was in the dire need of the

42. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual-1974*, 50.

43. Mehrunnisa Ali, 53.

44. Dilip Mukerjee, 'Afghanistan Under Daud: Relations with Neighbouring States', *Asian Survey*, Vol.xv, No.4, April 1975, 308.

45. *Dawn*, 20 September 1974.

Pakhtoons to legitimise and solidify his power. He had come to power through the powerful groups representing rural land lords. Mullahs, tribal leaders and young army officers. But he was never sure of their continued support. Therefore, the less secure the regime in Kabul felt itself, the more intense became their propaganda for Pakhtoonistan. By raising the stunt, they were trying to secure the support of the Pakistani Pakhtoons.⁴⁶

Failing, however, to secure any effective advantage by these antics, the Afghans tried once again to approach the Muslim world. Their chance came when Pakistan arranged in February 1974, the Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore. It was the biggest ever assemblage of the Muslim heads of state and government. Abdur Rahman Pazhwak, the Afghan delegate bewildered his hosts by raising the Pakhtoonistan issue when he stated in his speech that his country did not consider the Frontier and Baluchistan parts of Pakistan and as such Afghanistan could not be accused of interfering in Pakistan's internal matters.⁴⁷ Bhutto, shrewdly kept quiet and let President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and President Houari Boumedienne of Algeria to rebuke Pazhwak for bringing up differences between two Islamic States, especially when the purpose of the conference was to bring about unity in the Muslim world, for a concerted action against Israel.⁴⁸ Not content with this, Sardar Mohammad Naim, Special Envoy of the Afghan President and Waheed Abdullah, Deputy Foreign Minister, put across the Afghan case separately to Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Saudi Arabia, explaining to them the Pakhtoonistan problem.⁴⁹ A letter was also written to Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, asking him to take steps to move the international community to put pressure on Pakistan and to desist it from implementing its policy in Baluchistan and halt forthwith 'violations

46. Mehrunnisa Ali, 47.

47. *Dawn*, 28 July 1974.

48. Louis Dupree, 'A Note on Afghanistan: 1974', 13.

49. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual*, 1975, 156-172.

of human rights'.⁵⁰ A similar message was also sent to the Secretary General of the Conference of Islamic Countries.⁵¹ By this flurry of activity the Afghan motive was to create an impression that the situation in Baluchistan was similar to the 1971 situation in East Pakistan when a large number of refugees crossed over to India for refuge.

To counter the Afghan propaganda Bhutto sent letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as well as to the Islamic Secretariat, explaining to them the Pakistan case.⁵² The Prime Minister of Pakistan charged the Afghan Government of actively encouraging and assisting certain disgruntled elements in Pakistan to perform acts of murder, looting, sabotage and terrorism. He also maintained that the trouble had arisen from the continued Afghan interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and their violation of the principles concerning respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs.⁵³ Aziz Ahmed, Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, also drew the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Afghanistan's aggressive designs on Pakistan and their effort to seek the United Nation's cover for an unwarranted interference in Pakistan's internal affairs.⁵⁴ Aziz Ahmaed maintained that the number of Afghan refugees who had actually entered Pakistan due to the reign of terror prevailing in Afghanistan after the assumption of power by Daud was much larger than those who had crossed over to Afghanistan. According to Aziz Ahmed the number of the Afghans who had actually come to Pakistan was 'well over

50. *NAP'S Collusion with Afghanistan: Supreme Court Verdict*, (Islamabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1975), 10. Also see *Foreign Affairs Pakistan*, II, No.1, January 1975, 14-19.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Foreign Affairs Pakistan*, II, No.1, January 1975, 20-22. Also see *Dawn* 6 October 1974.

53. *NAP's Collusion with Afghanistan*, 10.

54. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

170,000' against only 344 Baluchis who were claimed by Afghanistan to have taken shelter there.⁵⁵

Side by side, the Daud Government drew up a subversion plan through trained saboteurs. During the early months of 1974 the terrorists set off as many as ten explosions in the Punjab and the Frontier, largely in areas like Charsada, Mardan and Swabi where they had pockets of the NAP supporters and therefore, could rely for shelter and support. In the summer of 1974, Wali Khan is reported to have stated to a NAP publication from London that since the ballot had not come to the rescue of the people, 'the bullet will have to settle the issue' as an alternative.⁵⁶ It may be recalled that whenever Wali Khan visited Afghanistan he was made to feel as if he were the head of a state. He was always housed in the State Guest House where Daud and his henchmen invariables called on him and his family. He was also met by the Commanders of the Afghan Forces, the Mayors and Heads of Departments. Ajmal Khattak and other Pakhtoon dissidents used to hold talks with him.⁵⁷ The former was the chief line between the NAP and the Afghan government and also managed the training camps of Pakhtoon insurgents at Kabul and Jallalabad. These insurgents were mobilized to fight for 'Pakhtoonistan' by undertaking acts of sabotage in Pakistan.⁵⁸ On 'Pakhtoonistan Day', Ajmal Khattak always came up with a provocative speech which was then broadcast from Radio Kabul.⁵⁹ The Afghans used to send Wali Khan to Pakistan with considerable fanfare. He was accompanied to Torkham by a huge 'Pakhtoonistan' flag-waving and slogan-raising

55. *Ibid.*

56. Quoted in 'Feature Service', Associated Press of Pakistan, 9.

57. *NAP's Collusion with Afghanistan*, 12.

58. *Supreme Court Judgement on Dissolution of NAP*, (Islamabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 30 October 1978), 146.

59. On one occasion he is reported to have said: 'Let us unite to snatch our rights from the usurper and decide that we shall fight together [The] World shall witness that our enemy is common.... our decisions shall be unanimous and we shall die and live together'. *Radio Kabul* (Kabul), 31 August 1973. translation of Ajmal Khattak's speech quoted in *Foreign Press Digest*, No.97, 20 September 1973, 464.

processions of between 3,000 and 5,000 people. On this side of the border, a reception committee headed by the NAP leaders and large number of supporters received him.⁶⁰ Almost invariably on Wali Khan's return his public utterances use to increase in their sting, incidents of violence against the government would also increase. In one of his speeches in November 1974, he openly declared that 'every foreign aid would be acceptable in overthrowing the present government of Pakistan. If, I cannot get rid of Bhutto and somebody is prepared to come and help me then be it the devil himself, I would shake hands with him'.⁶¹ It is estimated that between July and August 1974, there were about sixty explosions in Pakistan. After the month of September, the saboteurs began to extend their activities, making public buildings their target, including WAPDA House in Lahore, Peshawar GTS Bus Stop, pipelines of Sui Gas in Peshawar, Allied Bank in Mardan, Railway Station in Lahore, and a Cinema house in Islamabad. They caused extensive damage to life and property, spreading terror among the general public. The Government of Pakistan arrested several saboteurs in this connection and found them guilty.⁶² In June 1974, Bhutto disclosed in the National Assembly that a professional assassin had been hired in Afghanistan to kill him but the plot had been foiled by Pakistani intelligence agents. He alleged that the plan was conceived in Jallalabad and Ajmal Khattak was behind it.⁶³ Throughout 1974, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained strained. So much so that in July 1974, air flights between the two countries had to be suspended. The deployment of forces along the Durand Line both by Pakistan and Afghanistan increased manifold.⁶⁴ There were charges and counter charges of airspace

60. *NAP's Collusion with Afghanistan*, 12-14. For details also see Attorney-General Yahya Bakhtiar's Opening Address in the Supreme Court. Rawalpindi, June 1975, 37-43.

61. *The Pakistan Times*, 28 December 1974, and *Nawa-i-Waqat*, (Rawalpindi), 6 November 1974.

62. Details are given in 'Feature Service', *Associated Press of Pakistan*, 1-5.

63. *National Assembly Debates*, 13 June 1974.

64. *New York Times*, 23 September 1974.

violations.⁶⁵ Afghanistan also cut off almost completely its exports of fresh fruit to Pakistan. All through the summer and winter of 1974, the situation along the borders was tense. Radio Kabul increased its anti-Pakistan propaganda, claiming guerrilla victories over the Pakistan army. Despite these extreme provocations and blatant interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, Bhutto offered to sign a No-War Pact with Afghanistan.⁶⁶ He also invited the Afghan President to hold discussions with him.

During the early months of 1975, sabotage and terrorist activities by Afghan agents continued. On the afternoon of 8 February 1975, Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao, a Provincial Minister, was killed by a bomb explosion in the History Department of Peshawar University. Several other people were injured.⁶⁷ Sherpao was the main PPP leader in the Frontier who was the NAP's target for his whole hearted-support for change in the economic order of the area. Two previous attempts on his life had failed.⁶⁸ Wali Khan had held open threats to Sherpao's life. During one of his speeches in Charsaddah on 25 December 1974, he is reported to have said that 'if any harm came to his men he would realise it from Sherpao's flesh and property'.⁶⁹ These threats were in consonance with the tone of the broadcasts from Radio Kabul. A month before Sherpao's murder on 13 January 1975, Radio Kabul had blatantly declared that 'nothing would save him from the anger of the nation and if Sherpao continued as he was, his life on the soil of Pakhtoons would be impossible because the enmity of the nation had started giving out flames'.⁷⁰

65. *The Afghanistan Republic Annual-1975*, 212.

66. Mujtaba Razvi, 'Pak-Afghan Relations Since 1974: An Analysis', *Pakistan Horizon*, xxxii, No.4, 1979, 45.

67. *New York Times*, 9 February 1975.

68. 'Feature Service', *Associated Press of Pakistan*, 1975, 21-23. Also see details in the Yahya Bakhtiar's Opening Address in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, 1975, 29.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

All those arrested and tried in respect of acts of insurgency and bomb blasts, were persons directly or indirectly connected with the NAP. Some of them were even office holders of the Party. Thus, the Government of Pakistan on 10 February 1975, having satisfied itself fully that the NAP was operating in a manner prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of Pakistan, imposed a ban on it.⁷¹ Its properties and funds were forfeited. Several of its leaders, including Wali Khan, were arrested. Thousands of demonstrators ransacked and burned the NAP offices and called for vengeance for the assassination of Sherpao. Students demonstrated in front of the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad.⁷² Qayyum Khan, the Pakistan's Interior Minister, accused Afghanistan of being directly involved in all the subversive activities that had taken place in Pakistan. He warned that if they did not stop intervention in Pakistan affairs, 'We would be forced to take counter measures'.⁷³ In view of the seriousness of the situation Bhutto, who was on a scheduled visit of Romania, cancelled his departure. He was furious with 'a foreign neighbouring country, which was involved in disrupting normal life in Pakistan'.⁷⁴ On its part the Afghan Government condemned the direct rule in the Frontier and the ban on the NAP. It expressed 'anxiety and concern' and called these actions as 'unconstitutional' and 'illegal' for, according to the Afghans, it had been taken without levelling charges of any crime. It was alleged that the step had been taken only on political grounds.⁷⁵ In Pakistan, this statement was taken as a 'blatant interference'⁷⁶ in Pakistan's internal affairs which also provided another reminder of the NAP's affiliation with Kabul. The Afghan Government boasted that, they had been supporting and would continue to support the rights of its Pakhtoon and Baluchi brothers

71. *Supreme Court Judgement on Dissolution of NAP*, 18.

72. *New York Times*, 11 February 1975 and *Khyber Mail* (Peshawar), 16 February 1975.

73. *Sun* (Karachi), 17 February 1975.

74. *New York Times*, 18 February 1975

75. *The Pakistan Times* (Rawalpindi), 12 February 1975.

76. *Ibid*

and that it 'cannot remain unconcerned'⁷⁷ over the happenings in Pakistan. Radio Kabul continued to exploit and propagate against the Pakistan Government demanding the restoration of the majority government of the Pakhtoons and the Baluchis.⁷⁸

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan had always been quite sensitive but the coup of 17 July 1973, was more disturbing. Sardar Daud, in his very first post-coup broadcast, made an extremely uncomplimentary reference to Pakistan. In the light of Daud's personal involvement in the Pakhtoonistan issue and open support for the dissidents from the Baluchistan and the Frontier provinces seemed to Pakistan a blatant interference in its internal affairs. In the months that followed the new Afghan regime intensified its anti-Pakistan propaganda campaign, thus deepening the political tensions in a region that was already riddled with national rivalries and tribal jealousies. This attitude of Afghanistan created a tense atmosphere in Pakistan. Already Pakistan was facing colossal internal and external problems and now the troubled situation in Baluchistan and the Frontier added to its difficulties, especially with regard to the relation between the Opposition and the Government. Pakistan's stability depended on the cooperation of the Opposition with the Bhutto Government. But mistrust had developed between the Centre and the provinces to such an extent that a serious law and order situation was created. Internal rivalries in Baluchistan province were exploited by the Afghan Government and it resulted in Pak-Afghan border clashes. Afghan-trained insurgents were involved in the bomb blasts all over the country. Furthermore, Afghanistan was encouraging separatist movements along the Afghan border but after the 1971 crisis in East Pakistan, Pakistan could ill-afford any further dismemberment of the country. The Bhutto Government had gone out of its way to normalize relations with the Soviet Union in spite of the painful reminder that it had been fully responsible for the dismemberment of Pakistan. Bhutto

77. *Ibid.*, 16 February 1975.

78. Radio Kabul, Baluchi News, 1930 hours, 19 March 1975. 'Special Monitoring Report'. Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, No.508, Rawalpindi, 10-11.

also knew that if the occasion arose, the Soviet help would go to Afghanistan in the support of Pakistan's autonomy. In this situation, Bhutto's Government had to readjust its internal as well as external policies, especially with regard to the new government in Afghanistan. This change and its impact are the theme of the chapter that follows.