



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report briefly examines the historical aspects of Afghanistan's neutrality as an initial step toward a more comprehensive study of desirability and feasibility of neutrality-based diplomatic solutions for conflict in Afghanistan. The research and discussions conducted for the study were supported by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The author also thanks the management of Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University for their kind and invaluable assistance.

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Neutrality in Afghanistan's Foreign Policy

Summary

- The planned withdrawal of U.S. combat troops by the end of 2016 and a declining international engagement leave Afghanistan once again vulnerable to increasing competition from neighboring and regional states for strategic influence in the country.
- Given Afghanistan's geographic location and historical neutral status, experts have argued that an internationally guaranteed neutrality offers a least-worst but workable long-term solution to the problem of proxy conflict in the country.
- Historically, one form of neutrality, known as *bitarafi* in Farsi/Dari, has often been considered a pillar of Afghanistan's foreign and security policy. Although a formal foreign and security policy, *bitarafi* was a continuation of a colonially imposed buffer policy aimed at maintaining a balance between competing external powers.
- Except during the two world wars, Afghanistan's traditional neutrality has not fully conformed to the definitions and types of neutrality practiced by other neutral states. Conceptually, Afghanistan's traditional neutrality evolved into positive neutrality, neutralism, and nonalignment.
- Given the history of invasions and regional interferences in Afghanistan and the fragility of its state institutions today, Afghan government leaders are apprehensive about making the country a neutral state.
- Continuation of international support is vital to sustaining Afghan state institutions. Policy-makers in the new unity government, however, recognize that lasting peace and stability and regional cooperation require regional solutions.

Introduction

President Obama's decision to withdraw all U.S. combat troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2016, as well as an expected decline in civilian aid, leaves the field wide open once again for neighboring and regional states to intensify their race for strategic influence in the country.

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In the past, these zero-sum rivalries have fed proxy wars and impeded the consensus necessary among Afghans to maintain internal stability. The recent transfer of authority, however contested the process, from long-serving President Hamid Karzai to today's national unity team headed by Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah seems to have avoided a relapse into conflict. Such a fragile political consensus, however, means that Afghanistan is still vulnerable to internal insurgent threats and outside interference in its affairs.

It has been argued, by international diplomats in particular, that an internationally guaranteed neutrality offers a least-worst but workable long-term resolution to Afghanistan's proneness to proxy conflict.¹ Afghanistan's geographic location positions it, at least potentially, as a facilitator for wider regional economic cooperation, an initiative most recently backed by the ongoing Heart of Asia or Istanbul Process. Proponents of permanent neutrality argue that it would ensure state stability and integrity, alleviate security and strategic concerns of major regional stakeholders, and neutralize the contest among regional competitors. They assert that that past periods of stability have generally coincided with some form of neutrality policy and that a return to neutrality could thus be a return to normalcy and stability.

However, a deeper evaluation and an examination of initiatives and proposals since the 1979 Soviet occupation challenge these assumptions. A cursory look at successful neutral states reveals that, beyond a geostrategic location, other factors are necessary to maintain neutrality, including internal cohesion, acceptance by regional powers, and the perceived military capability of the neutral state to defend itself. To date, geopolitical tensions and deep-rooted mistrust among regional stakeholders have rendered regional cooperation initiatives and solutions ineffective and have left Afghanistan vulnerable to intervention.

Ultimately, permanent neutrality as a compromise solution for the future of Afghanistan requires more than a declaration of intent. Neutrality cannot be a long-term solution until strength and political cohesion are established in the near term.

Definitions, Scope, and Practice

Neutrality at its most basic is "the state of not supporting or helping either side in a conflict."² In the context of international law and interstate relations, it is defined as a wartime political position involving legal duties and responsibilities. An early definition included

observance of a strict and honest impartiality, so as not to afford advantage in the war to either party; and particularly in so far restraining its trade to the accustomed course which is held in time of peace, as not to render assistance to one of the belligerents in escaping the effects of the other's hostilities. Even a loan of money to one of the belligerent parties is considered a violation of neutrality.³

The rights and duties of neutral states and persons during war were further codified by the Hague Convention of 1907 as "the first embodiment of neutral rights and duties under positivist international law."⁴ Although traditional legal definitions focus mainly on negative rights of neutrals during war—in other words, what neutrals should not do—recent definitions allow for a more positive and constructive role of the neutral state as an honest broker capable of offering good offices and mediating between belligerents.⁵ Neutrality is thus not only a wartime legal status but also a peacetime political and diplomatic posture.

Types of Neutrality

The scope and nature of neutrality have evolved over time, and various subtypes—such as neutralization, neutralism, armed neutrality, positive neutrality, nonaligned, military non-

aligned, non-allied—have emerged.⁶ The meaning has also been stretched to accommodate states' interests and changes in global politics.⁷

Based on their legal and political dimensions, policies have been divided into three broad categories: neutralization or permanent neutrality, neutralism or nonalignment, and neutrality or militarily un-aligned. Each type can, depending on the depth of analysis, be further divided into subcategories.

Neutralization is the formal and strict type of neutrality practiced during both war and peace. It is also referred to as permanent neutrality or perpetual neutrality. A neutralized state is defined as

A state whose political independence and territorial integrity is guaranteed permanently by a collective agreement of great powers, subject to conditions that the neutralized state will not take up arms against another state, except to defend itself, and will not assume treaty obligations which may compromise its neutralized status.⁸

Official and internationally recognized agreements distinguish formal legal neutrality from other types. It can be either self-declared and externally recognized and guaranteed or externally proscribed and guaranteed with some tacit understanding and acceptance by the country. Switzerland's neutrality is a classic example of the first type. Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, and Laos—at various times—have been instances of the second. Turkmenistan's proclamation of permanent neutrality appears notionally similar to that of Switzerland in that it is self-declared and externally recognized. Legally and practically, however, the two are quite different. Swiss permanent neutrality was recognized and guaranteed by major European powers in 1815. Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality was endorsed merely in a nonbinding UN general assembly resolution in 1996.

Neutralism was a Cold War phenomenon, expressed through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and refers to a policy of distancing oneself from the East-West conflict while trying to maintain an independent outlook toward global issues. Neutralism, in the eyes of its proponents, such as India, Indonesia, the former Yugoslavia, Egypt, and others, was an attempt to "remove or, at least, mitigate some of the harshness of the Cold War struggle."⁹ In its essence, neutralism is a political and diplomatic posture and has no legal implications. Since the nonaligned countries defined this version of neutrality in relation to the Cold War power struggle and colonialism, their relevance as a group in the post-Cold war era has declined significantly and their actions in foreign policy, especially at a regional level, have often lost any character of neutrality.

Neutral or militarily un-aligned refers to the classical form declared and observed during major wars, legal obligations being enshrined in the provisions of The Hague convention and enforced only for the period of war. This category includes states that prefer to remain neutral after cessation of war and that declare their peacetime neutrality in internal legislation without seeking international recognition or guarantee. In the past, Sweden, Ireland, and Finland have described themselves as neutral states this way.

An Evaluation

Some form of neutrality has often been considered one of the pillars of Afghanistan's foreign and security policy. Throughout the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was a buffer state separating the territories of the rival British and Russian empires in the region. Since regaining full independence in 1919—in particular independence in making its own foreign policy—almost all rulers of Afghanistan have advocated some form of neutrality in their official policy statements.¹⁰

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In the past three decades, a number of policymakers and scholars have argued that a return to neutrality will restore stability and tranquility in Afghanistan and attempts have been made to turn it into a permanently neutral state.

However, except during the two world wars, Afghanistan's traditional neutrality does not fully conform to the identified formal definitions. Instead, in the parlance of Afghanistan's foreign policy, the term neutrality was transliterated from the Persian word *bitarafi* (without sides). Louis Dupree, a prominent scholar of Afghanistan's history, believed that *bitarafi* was not synonymous with neutrality but rather meant "without sides in great powers' conflicts."¹¹ In practice, after World War II the term *bitarafi* was used to denote both a policy of non-alignment and a policy of balancing between neighboring powers.

Afghanistan's tradition of *bitarafi* is usually associated with what is called the Era of Tranquility, which lasted from 1929 to 1978.¹² However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this period was a direct consequence of neutrality or the product of an environment of domestic and international stability.

Afghanistan declared and observed a strict wartime neutrality during both world wars and remained impartial during the postwar ideological confrontations, striving to maintain balanced relations between the East and the West. It shifted toward neutralism and joined the NAM. The 1978 communist coup d'état and the subsequent Soviet military invasion disrupted that equilibrium and placed Afghanistan at the center of East-West active hostility, triggering a cycle of violence and conflicts that continues to plague the region today.¹³

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Efforts and Proposals, 1980–2013

In Afghanistan, neutrality has repeatedly been proposed for security and balance of power in the region. Most of the efforts have been initiated by outside powers, often during situations of crisis or toward the end of foreign interventions.

One of the first attempts was a U.S.-supported and British-led neutralization initiative in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Soviet invasion.¹⁴ The initiative was put forward by the British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, in the midst of international fury over the invasion. It envisaged that an agreement on neutralization, modeled after the 1955 agreement on Austria,¹⁵ could end the Soviet military occupation and pave the way for a face-saving withdrawal of the Soviet forces.¹⁶ The initiative, which included an immediate military withdrawal, was swiftly rejected by both the Soviet leadership and the communist regime in Kabul on the grounds that it was a plot by the West to undo the "revolution" and reestablish Western influence.¹⁷

The next attempt came in the wake of the Soviet military withdrawal in 1988. This time the initiative was conceived in Moscow but officially proposed by the regime in Kabul. President Mohammad Najibullah called on the Secretary General of the UN to hold an international conference to discuss the reinstatement and confirmation of Afghanistan's permanent neutrality and to work out an international assistance program in support of a peace and reconciliation program.¹⁸ At the domestic level, Najibullah instructed Afghanistan's Academy of Science in May 1989 to study the feasibility of adopting a policy of demilitarized permanent neutrality. A year later, in May 1990, the constitution was amended to reflect the regime's desire for neutralization and demilitarization. An entire new chapter in the amended constitution was dedicated to foreign policy and, for the first time in the country's history, the term *permanent neutrality* featured in its constitution.¹⁹

Although Najibullah managed to secure consensus among his elites on the declaration, the initiative did not attract serious regional and international support. Western capitals and Afghan resistance forces in fact predicted an imminent collapse of the Kabul regime

soon after the withdrawal of Soviet forces.²⁰ At that juncture, with the Soviet Union on the verge of collapse, neither Kabul nor Moscow had enough political capital to garner wider support for such an ambitious proposal.

The failure of both initiatives indicate that as long as any of the conflicting parties believe that a victory is achievable on the battlefield, accepting neutrality as the basis for a solution to a conflict or political crisis is out of the question. Consensus on a neutrality declaration therefore requires a military stalemate accompanied by diplomatic leverage and perseverance.

These two cases were conceived by diplomatic actors. Additional neutralization proposals have been raised in Track 2 diplomacy and scholarly discussions. After the failure of Lord Carrington's initiative in the early 1980s, Selig Harrison, an American scholar and South Asia expert, declared that a "Finland-style arrangement"—a softer and more Soviet-friendly version of neutralization, which could include a phased withdrawal of Soviet forces, with a medium-term return to Afghanistan's policy of *bitarafi*—could win Moscow's acceptance.²¹ Harrison believed that such an arrangement would be possible only if the Soviet Union pursued limited objectives in Afghanistan and if the leadership in Moscow was serious about finding a consensus solution to conflict in Afghanistan rather than relying on the total victory of its client government there. These assumptions turned out to be false.

Another noted but unofficial appeal came at the height of the Taliban and al-Qaeda's power in Afghanistan. In a June 2000 hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations,²² Peter Tomsen, former U.S. envoy for the Afghan resistance, urged Washington to encourage and support international negotiations aimed at removing Afghanistan from regional rivalries. Like Carrington in the 1980s, Tomsen proposed that the "1955 State Treaty on Austrian Neutrality" might be a useful model.²³ However, neither the Clinton administration nor the George W. Bush administration had any visible foreign policy interest in Afghanistan from 1992 to September 2001. Tomsen's proposal went unheeded.²⁴

During the decade plus of U.S. intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks, the only country to occasionally speak about Afghanistan's neutrality was Russia. While supporting the international security and reconstruction efforts, it also emphasized that Afghanistan should become a neutral state after the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission ended. Moscow also actively campaigned for the removal of NATO/ISAF hubs from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Russian officials in private meetings with the Afghan authorities continuously raised their concern about the size, purpose, and duration of the U.S. military bases inside Afghanistan.²⁵ Thus, the Russian policy of favoring a neutral Afghanistan followed the old pattern in the context of the great power rivalry, in which the weaker power prefers neutralizing the contested area to prevent rivals from accessing and dominating it.

Discussions on neutrality-based solutions resumed in the wake of President Obama's plan to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan. In a 2009 *New York Times* op-ed, former U.S. assistant secretary of state Karl Inderfurth and Ambassador James Dobbins, who later became Obama's special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, asserted that the "ultimate exit strategy" for Afghanistan could include a multilateral accord to declare Afghanistan a permanently neutral country.²⁶ Dobbins insisted on Afghanistan's permanent neutrality—though he used the term *permanently nonaligned* to not upset Karzai—as a requisite of a durable solution for the conflict there.

In a private testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 23, 2011, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton confirmed the need for a broad regional diplomatic gathering akin to that of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which had declared "the Benelux countries as a free zone."²⁷ She argued, "If we could get to that point with the regional powers in South Asia that would not recommence with the great game in Afghanistan that

would be a very worthy outcome.”²⁸ Officially, however, neutrality remained an unmarketable policy, in part because of Karzai’s resistance to the idea. Instead, the concept of a grand regional gathering was transformed into a regional confidence-building and cooperation forum, known as the Istanbul Process, launched in November 2011.²⁹

The most recent call for neutralization came even after Afghanistan signed strategic partnership agreements (SPAs) with the United States and other major regional and European countries and subsequently became a “major non-NATO ally” of the United States.³⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, professor of public policy at George Mason University, argued in 2013 that “a tradition of repelling invaders...as well as formidable geography that is difficult to occupy make Afghanistan a natural candidate for neutralization.”³¹ Given the regional and international security implications of destabilization, Cronin insisted that building consensus would be more viable in a post-withdrawal environment than at any time during the Cold War.

Afghanistan’s neutrality was also discussed in a regional Track 2 forum recently established to develop policy recommendations for confidence-building and closer cooperation among the countries in the region. This resulted, in November 2013, in a *Joint Declaration on Regional Peace and Stability* recommending a gradual “Afghan led and Afghan specific neutrality.”³² The document described neutrality as “a vision and goal” to be arrived at gradually and in tandem with other regional initiatives. It does not seem to point to neutralization in terms of a formal, internationally guaranteed, long-term status.

Foreign Policy

In the early nineteenth century, intense rivalry between two major European powers—Great Britain and Tsarist Russia—extended into the Far East and the Indian subcontinent. Afghanistan became proxy battleground in the Anglo-Russian struggle for dominance in the region.³³

After two rounds of failed British military campaigns, and futile Russian attempts to win over fugitive and incumbent Afghan kings and princes, both imperial powers agreed to accept Afghanistan as a buffer state in which neither would seek to increase its influence to the detriment of the other. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 formalized this understanding, which largely continued beyond the British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent and its partition into India and Pakistan.³⁴

The term *buffer state*, now a common term in international relations, was first used in 1883 by British India officials in reference to Afghanistan.³⁵ Both Russia and Britain, through a series of agreements—Granville-Gorchakov agreement of 1873, Abdul Rahman–Sir Mortimer Durand agreement of 1893, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907—delineated the boundaries of Afghanistan as a geographic buffer between the two empires.

Afghanistan’s positioning was arguably effective in maintaining the balance of power in the region for almost a hundred years.³⁶ The buffer status also served the domestic interests of the Afghan leaders, in that they received substantial cash and arms from the British and occasional support from Russia but still avoided direct British and Russian influence in their internal affairs. Afghanistan’s religious, tribal, and ethnic leaders also favored the policy, if only as isolation from foreign meddling.³⁷

The first instance of Afghanistan upholding a policy of neutrality with some degree of independence occurred during World War I. Despite still being a British protectorate and proscribed from formulating its own foreign policy, Afghanistan faced the real choice of entering the war or remaining neutral. Domestically, the decision to remain neutral became particularly challenging when, in late October 1914, the Ottoman Empire—the de facto leader of the Islamic world—joined the war in support of the Central Powers against Britain.

Britain and Russia urged the Afghan ruler, Amir Habibullah I (1901–19), to remain neutral. In September 1914, King George V wrote a letter reminding Habibullah that neutrality was in Afghanistan's interest, urging him to remain neutral and assuring him of an eventual British and Allied victory.³⁸ Habibullah initially did declare Afghanistan neutral, but subsequent developments seriously tested his ability to uphold the policy.³⁹ On September 1915, a Turco-German delegation known as the Niedermayer-Hentig Expedition arrived in Kabul to attempt to persuade Habibullah to back the Central Powers. At the same time, certain members of the ruling family led by Nasrullah Khan (Habibullah's brother) and a pan-Islamist Afghan intelligentsia led by Mahmud Tarzi (editor in-chief of *Siraj-al Akhbar*, the only Afghan newspaper) also lobbied for an alliance with the Turks and Germans.⁴⁰

British authorities in India demanded that, as a neutral country, Afghanistan should arrest and disarm the members of the Niedermayer-Hentig delegation, who represented belligerent states. Habibullah did not consider the delegation's visit to Afghanistan a breach of neutrality, however, and instead entertained it for nearly two years without giving a definite response. Similarly, he waited sixteen months before replying to King George's letter in January 1916.

Habibullah took his time and tried to strengthen domestic support for his policy of neutrality by holding a consultative gathering, a *jiirga*, on October 1915.⁴¹ A week after replying to King George's letter and reiterating his commitment to neutrality, Habibullah signed a treaty of friendship with Germany. The treaty was more of a tactical step to appease the pro-German domestic lobby and provide a face-saving exit for the Niedermayer-Hentig delegation rather than a serious commitment to joining the war against British interests in India. It specified, for example, that any possible support from the Afghan government was contingent on the arrival of more than twenty thousand German or Turkish troops inside Afghanistan and supply of a hundred thousand rifles, three hundred canon, and at least ten million pounds to the government of Afghanistan. Immediately after signing the document, Habibullah privately reassured the British envoy of his neutrality resolve. However, by signing the treaty with Germany, he also wanted to send a signal to the British that he was determined to act as an independent sovereign. With hindsight, one can argue that neutrality was the most rational policy for Afghanistan at the time, and one that enabled Habibullah to secure promises of concessions from the British and a treaty of friendship with Germany at the same time.

After the conclusion of the war, it became apparent that the size of British concessions neither matched Kabul's aspiration for independence nor corresponded with the difficulties Habibullah had endured to confine domestic dissatisfaction with his policy and prevent the uprising of the frontier tribes against British India.⁴² The nationalists were emboldened. Habibullah lost the remaining support he had enjoyed during the war and was assassinated in February 1919.

From a conceptual and international legal viewpoint, this first episode of Afghanistan's neutrality fits the general definition as described in the 1907 Hague Convention.⁴³ However, given the noted setbacks, wartime neutrality did not carry over into peacetime neutrality. Afghanistan's post-World War I and postindependence foreign policies were guided by an anticolonial fervor influenced by the prevailing idealism of the period.

The Search for Allies

After ascending the throne in Kabul, the reformist Afghan King Amanullah (1919–29), son of Habibullah, in his first formal correspondence with the British pressed for negotiations that would grant Afghanistan full independence. Britain's rejection of the demand prompted Amanullah to unilaterally declare Afghanistan an independent country on April 19, 1919.⁴⁴

Contrary to his father's defensive policies, Amanullah initiated a political and diplomatic offensive to compel Britain to recognize Afghanistan's independence. He ended Afghanistan's policy of isolation, appointed Mahmud Tarzi as the first foreign minister, and dispatched Mohammad Wali Khan Darwazi as his first ambassador-at-large to negotiate the establishment of diplomatic relations with other countries around the world.⁴⁵ Between 1919 and 1922, Afghanistan signed treaties of bilateral cooperation with Russia, Turkey, France, Italy, and Iran.⁴⁶ In search of new alliances, Darwazi traveled in July 1921 to Washington, DC, where he met with President Warren Harding, solicited diplomatic recognition, and asked for the establishment of economic ties between Afghanistan and the United States. Washington, which considered Afghanistan to be part of the British sphere of influence, declined to confer diplomatic recognition or to invest in the country.

Amanullah's ambitious attempt to attract new allies and his closer ties with Soviet Russia, which provided generous financial and technical support, did not end Afghanistan's economic and military dependence on British India. Amanullah failed to realize that even as a fully independent country recognized by a dozen regional and European nations, striking a "correct balance" in relations with the British and Soviet empires would have to remain the fundamental principle of Afghanistan's foreign policy. Abdul Samad Ghaus, author and former deputy foreign minister (1973–78), even suggests that Amanullah's unorthodox foreign policy—hostile toward Britain while welcoming Russians and other Europeans—may have contributed to the collapse of his rule in 1929, when he was deposed following tribal uprisings.⁴⁷

Keeping the Balance

After the brief stint of Amir Habibullah Kalakani, the leader of the uprising that deposed Amanullah, Mohammed Nadir, a former military chief, seized power in Kabul. Nadir (1929–33) favored closer ties with Britain, which had supported him in his campaign for power. According to Ghaus, "Nadir Shah saw to it that the Afghan foreign policy, having wandered from its natural course, was brought back into line....The pendulum, which had gone too far to the left, swung back to the middle."⁴⁸

Nadir, in his opening remarks to the opening session of the Afghan National Assembly, stated, "The best and most fruitful policy that one can imagine for Afghanistan is a policy of neutrality. Afghanistan must give its neighbours assurances of its friendly attitudes while safeguarding the right of reciprocity."⁴⁹ At the official level, Nadir Shah elevated neutrality as the core principle of Afghanistan's foreign policy. His most significant challenge, however, according to the historian Vartan Gregorian, was "to make Afghan neutrality a reality and to convince all elements, including the Soviets and the Muslim nationalist-modernists inside and outside the country, that he was not a tool of British imperialism."⁵⁰

Nadir took a series of steps to build confidence in his policy. He reaffirmed previous Anglo-Afghan treaties and signed a new treaty of neutrality and nonaggression with the Soviet Union.⁵¹ To further convince his powerful neighbors that Afghanistan would be truly neutral, Nadir did not take sides in subsequent conflicts and Pashtun uprisings against British India in tribal areas, refrained from intervening in the affairs of Soviet Central Asia, and expelled Central Asian independence fighters from northern Afghanistan. He struck the necessary balance in his ties with Britain and the Soviet Union, avoiding them as much as possible, and increasingly engaged with the so-called third powers—that is, other European nations such as Germany, France, and Italy—in developing Afghanistan's economic and education sectors.

Nadir's reign came to an abrupt end with his assassination in November 1933. The delicate tasks of maintaining balance in foreign policy and nurturing his peacetime policy of neutrality were left to his teenage successor, Mohammed Zahir, and the former king's conservative younger brother Mohammed Hashim, who served as regent. Although the young

king remained the de jure sovereign, Hashim actually steered Afghanistan's foreign relations over the next thirteen years.

Zahir did not make direct reference to Afghanistan's neutrality in his first major policy speech to the parliament in 1934. Instead, he alluded to a unilateral policy of nonaggression toward neighbors and expected reciprocal treatment. Gregorian argues that "in practice the Hashim government was guided by the same principles as Nadir in foreign policy."⁵² However, some moves—such as Afghanistan's participation in the Saadabad Pact of 1937, a regional security alliance allegedly aimed at containing the Soviet influence, and Kabul's growing political and economic ties with Nazi Germany—indicate an increasing desire for forging alliances as and when available.⁵³

Wartime Neutrality

Once again anxious about provoking either of its powerful neighbors, Afghanistan refused to take part in World War II. On September 6, 1939, Zahir Shah, on the advice of his prime minister (and uncle) Mohammad Hashim, declared that Afghanistan would remain neutral and not join any of the warring alliances.⁵⁴ Much like its counterpart had during World War I, the Hashim government faced serious pressure from the government and the public. First, an active and strong ultranationalist and somewhat pro-German constituency existed in the highest ranks of government, including two of his favorite nephews (Zahir Shah's cousins) Prince Daoud and Naim, who later became prime minister and foreign minister, respectively. Second, nearly two hundred German and Italian technical experts worked and lived in Afghanistan, some of whom were accused of subversive activities against British interests in the tribal areas.⁵⁵ Third, Germany's investment in the nascent economic and financial sectors had been generous and the public was generally sympathetic to Germany, in contrast to being suspicious of and disgusted with British and Soviet activities in the country.⁵⁶ However, Zahir Shah's declaration of neutrality had the support of his powerful prime minister, who "had the final say on all policy matters."⁵⁷ To strengthen his position, Zahir called a grand assembly of elders (*loya jirga*) in November 1941 to deliberate on the policy of neutrality and provide advice on the Allies' demands for the eviction of all suspicious Axis nationals from Afghan territory.⁵⁸

The jirga overwhelmingly supported neutrality and announced both that Afghanistan would not allow belligerents to use its territory against one another and that the country stood ready to defend itself against foreign aggression. The jirga also recommended that German and Italian nationals be given a dignified and safe exit to their home countries.⁵⁹ Except for a few diplomats who remained in Kabul, most Axis nationals were deported from Afghanistan to Turkey with such a guarantee of safe passage.

With few exceptions, then, between 1930 and 1945 Afghanistan pursued an internationally sanctioned wartime neutrality and a peacetime neutrality similar to those followed by other neutral states at the time.⁶⁰ However, rapid and dramatic shifts in postwar international and regional contexts—such as the demise of the British Empire, the emergence of the Soviet Union and the United States as the two dominant global powers with competing ideologies, and, most significantly, the creation of Pakistan as an independent state incorporating the frontier Pashtun tribes—forced the Afghan government to review its foreign and domestic policies. Although the older and more conservative policymakers, such as Hashim, thought that Afghanistan could continue its buffer-neutral state policy by replacing the British with the Americans in the traditional balancing formula, the younger and more hardline group—the troika of Daoud, Naim, and Majid Zabuli, an industrialist and later minister of national economy—began to demand radical reforms in foreign and domestic policies.

Badly bruised by post-partition developments, including the lack of international sympathy for Afghanistan's position on the issue of the Durand Line, which demarcated the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan,⁶¹ and the ultimate incorporation of the Pashtun tribal areas east of the Durand Line into the new state of Pakistan, Zahir was forced to adopt a harder line. Although the period under the prime ministership of Shah Mahmud (1946–53) saw some improvement in relations with the outside world (particularly with the United States),⁶² Zahir's appointment of his cousin Mohammed Daoud effectively marked the end of Afghanistan's tradition of neutrality.

The policies followed by successive Afghan governments, first Daoud and later the Soviet occupation, could be described as neutralism, positive neutrality, and nonalignment, differing in meaning and scope from how Afghanistan had previously interpreted its policy. Any discussion of Afghanistan's neutrality, particularly from the 1955 Bandung Conference that created the NAM, needs to consider this shift in concept and practice.⁶³

Neutralism and Nonalignment

Prime Minister Daoud (1953–63) quickly embarked on a reform and modernization drive which, according to Amin Saikal, pivoted on “three interrelated policy goals: to centralize power as comprehensively as possible under his leadership, to institute a command-based process of speedy social and economic change, and to promote Pashtunism as the foundation for Afghan nationalism...”⁶⁴

To achieve these goals, Daoud introduced revolutionary changes in the structure of his cabinet. First, he appointed a group of like-minded, young, and highly educated ministers. He was acutely aware that his goals could not be realized without economic, military, and political support from external sources. Strict adherence to traditional (passive) neutrality limited his ability to enlist much-needed foreign assistance in pursuit of his domestic and regional ambitions.

Daoud calculated that a shift in foreign policy was possible because the strategic imperatives that had forced Afghanistan to be a buffer state in the past had disappeared. With the British departure from India, Afghanistan was no longer constrained by keeping a strict balance between its northern and southern neighbors. During this period, it was actively engaged in a territorial and political dispute with Pakistan and was eagerly looking for partners to strengthen its position.

He therefore redefined neutrality to attract military and political support from, in particular, the Soviet Union. Explaining this shift, Sayed Qasim Reshtia, author and press minister in the 1960s, affirms that the new policy “was based on the national interest and independent judgement of the people of Afghanistan.”⁶⁵ According to Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, Afghanistan's permanent representative at the United Nations in the 1960s, the new policy was intended to preserve close and friendly relations with the United States and the Soviet Union and thus to receive unconditional assistance but not be aligned with either side.⁶⁶ Reshtia argues that in the early years this policy enabled Afghanistan to receive considerable development aid from various sources, including the U.S. government.⁶⁷

Over time, frustrated by the American lack of interest in meaningful assistance and Washington's pro-Pakistani approach,⁶⁸ Daoud found the Soviet bloc a more responsive partner. Politically, he joined the NAM to maintain a veneer of Afghanistan's neutral posture and preserve his ability to engage all sides. From this point, in the words of Reshtia, “Afghanistan's neutrality had evolved into active nonalignment.”⁶⁹

On July 17, 1973, Daoud (now the Afghan president after a bloodless coup against Zahir Shah) described this new form of neutrality in a national address: “The foreign policy of

Afghanistan is based on neutrality, non-participation in military pacts, and independent judgment of the issues by the people themselves. Emanating from our national aspirations, this policy is designed to fulfil the material and spiritual needs of the people.”⁷⁰

By this time, however, and according to William Piez, an economic and political officer at the U.S. embassy (1963–66), Afghanistan was

considered to be a neutral country but with a pretty strong Communist influence. Their [Afghanistan’s] representative at the UN almost always voted on the Soviet side of any issue and was recognized by American political analysts as essentially a kind of stalking horse for Russians whenever an important issue came up.⁷¹

Perhaps neither Daoud nor other Afghan policymakers and intellectuals of the time foresaw the historical outcome: that Daoud’s emotional and obsessive Pakistan-centric foreign and security policy drove Afghanistan deeply into the Soviet orbit. The so-called unconditional assistance and training offered by the Eastern bloc brought with it a zealous ideology that soon pervaded all levels of Afghan government and society and sowed the seeds of instability for decades to come.

The Soviet invasion ended what was left of Afghan autonomy and neutrality, though the Soviet-backed regimes would continue to espouse neutrality in their rhetoric. Even within the NAM, the invasion caused a serious division between members when Yugoslavia and several Arab states decided to condemn it on the basis of NAM’s principle of noninterference. The effort was promptly suppressed by a joint Soviet and Cuban diplomatic offensive.⁷²

Ironically, even the Afghan communist regimes, despite their obvious military dependence on and ideological association with the Soviet Union, formally remained committed to the rhetoric of neutrality. Prime Minister Noor Mohammed Taraki, in a radio address in May 1978, avowed that “the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan adheres to a policy of non-alignment and positive and active neutrality...based on principles of peaceful coexistence.”⁷³

Afghanistan officially remained a member of the NAM after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal and the fall of the last communist regime in 1992, as well as during the five troubled years of the Mujahideen government in Kabul from 1992 to 1996. Given that this was a period of civil war, and that the government was badly divided, there was no real possibility of making an independent foreign policy. The Taliban regime that followed (1996–2001) was more of an ideological movement than a government with articulated domestic and foreign policy goals. As Olivier Roy once emphasized, “The Taliban have no foreign policy.”⁷⁴ Moreover, the Taliban regime was not recognized by the wider international community, and no records indicate their official position on Afghanistan’s neutrality and membership in the NAM.⁷⁵

Attitude Under Karzai

The post-2001 government of Afghanistan has remained an active member of the NAM and regularly participates in the movement’s meetings. However, it has refrained from using the term neutrality in its official statements over the past thirteen years. Whereas most previous Afghan leaders considered neutrality a principle of Afghan foreign policy—at least rhetorically—Karzai was particularly sensitive about even references to it.⁷⁶ In fact, occasionally he went so far as to openly discuss the desire to strengthen ties between Afghanistan and NATO member states.

Some senior cabinet members went further in interviews, challenging the entire logic of Afghanistan’s traditional neutrality and disagreeing with the proposition that it was the most suitable foreign policy for the country. Instead, recalling the Russian invasion of 1979, these ministers argued that, especially in the absence of a credible domestic or international enforcement mechanism, it made Afghanistan vulnerable to foreign aggression. One of the ministers added emphatically that had Afghanistan joined the Western-led alliances of the

time, such as the Central Treaty Organization, and had Afghanistan maintained a more strategic than Pakistan-centric attitude toward the United States, the Soviet leadership would have thought twice before invading the country in 1979.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Historically, bitarafi has been a prominent feature of Afghanistan's foreign policy but has also been advanced by different actors at different times with varying definitions and has often involved active balancing among rival regional military powers under a broad banner of neutrality. This study offers three broad conclusions on a basis of its historical review.

First, Afghanistan's postindependence policy of neutrality was not a strategic choice crafted through usual policymaking processes but instead a meek continuation of a colonially imposed buffer policy. The main function of this policy was for Afghanistan to maintain a certain balance between its neighboring and hegemonic powers, initially the Soviet Union and the British Empire and later the Soviet Union and the United States.

Second, despite some consistency in official statements of the various Afghan governments regarding neutrality, in practice the country was never truly neutral except during the two world wars. Afghan rulers from time to time used a broad definition of the concept of bitarafi, often to their own convenience. Neutrality often served as a fallback position to which they could return whenever other alternatives failed or proved highly risky. Although subsequent governments insisted on their neutrality, over time, conceptually, the country's traditional neutrality evolved into positive neutrality, neutralism, and nonalignment.

Third, most permanent neutrality initiatives and proposals put forward since the Soviet invasion have emerged as a tactical response to a situation of crisis. The initiatives were usually pushed by the trailing external player in the conflict, the United States and the UK in the 1980s and the Soviet Union in 1989–90, which at the time also lacked the political leverage to create consensus among major stakeholders on the merits of declaring Afghanistan a formal neutral state.

This historical analysis therefore does not support the argument of neutrality proponents—mainly foreign academic and diplomatic circles—that Afghanistan was a neutral state in the past and therefore is amenable to a permanent neutrality in future. On the contrary, domestically, given the history of invasions and interference in Afghan affairs and the fragility of state institutions, top-level policymakers have been generally apprehensive about schemes to make Afghanistan a neutral state.

This negative outlook, however, appears to be slowly shifting. This move was evident from the proceedings of the Track 2 regional peace and stability forum involving high-profile Afghan politicians, former diplomats, and civil society leaders, which endorsed a vision of "Afghan-led and Afghanistan-specific enduring neutrality." The participants who endorsed a long-term vision of neutral Afghanistan are senior members of the national unity government team, but it is hard to predict whether the debate could gain momentum in the near future. Nonetheless, the consensus among Afghan policymakers is that though continuation of international support is vital to sustainability of Afghan state institutions, at least for another decade, to achieve lasting peace and stability and to realize the benefits of regional cooperation in and around Afghanistan, it is equally important to keep exploring internationally backed regional arrangements. A treaty of regional nonaggression and neutrality will remain an option in the menu of long-term diplomatic solutions.

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Notes

1. Numerous international and regional experts and former diplomats in recent years—including Ambassadors James Dobbins, Karl Inderfurth, and Peter Tomsen in the United States, Hamid Ansari and Chinmaya Gharekhan in India, and Aziz Ahmad Khan in Pakistan—have argued in favor of a neutrality-based solution for the Afghan crisis. For more information, see Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Thinking Long on Afghanistan: Could It Be Neutralized?” *Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2013); Karl F. Inderfurth and James Dobbins, “Ultimate Exit Strategy,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2009.
2. *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/neutrality>.
3. John Bouvier, *A Law Dictionary: Adapted to the Constitution and Laws of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: T. & J. W. Johnson, 1843), 772.
4. Christine Agius, *The Social Construction of Swedish Neutrality: Challenges to Swedish Identity and Sovereignty* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 15.
5. Oppenheim, one of the founders of the modern discipline of international law, defines neutrality as “the attribute of impartiality adopted by third states toward the belligerents and recognized by the belligerents, such attribute creating responsibilities and duties between the impartial states and belligerents.” T. J. Lawrence emphasizes that “neutrality may be defined as the condition of those states which in time of war take no part in the contest, but part in the contest but continue pacific intercourse with the belligerents.” See L. F. Oppenheim, *International Law: A Treatise*, vol. 1, *Peace*, ed. Hersch Lauterpacht, 8th ed. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955); T. J. Lawrence, *The Principles of International Law*, 4th ed. (Boston: D.C Heath, 1910), 587.
6. According to Agius and Devine, confusion over the terminology and labels used to denote neutrality is considerable. See Christine Agius and Karen Devine, “Neutrality: A Really Dead Concept? A Reprise,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 3 (2011).
7. Neutrality is a historically developed concept and, like all such concepts, it denotes different things at different times. L. Modjoryan, “Neutrality,” *New Times*, Moscow, February 15, 1956, 17. Quoted in Peter Lyon, “Neutrality and Emergence of the Concept of Neutralism,” *Review of Politics* 22, no. 2 (1960): 266.
8. Cyril E. Black, *Neutralization and World Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), xi.
9. Lyon, “Neutrality and Emergence,” 267.
10. After World War II, Afghanistan’s foreign relations outlook was based largely on two themes: unification of all Pashtun territory in both Pakistan and Afghanistan under Afghan rule and Cold War nonalignment through a policy of strict neutrality. See Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 123. See also Zubeida Hasan, “The Foreign Policy of Afghanistan,” *Pakistan Horizon* 17, no. 1 (1964): 48.
11. See Louis Dupree, “Myth and Reality in Afghan ‘Neutralism,’” *Central Asian Survey* 7, no. 2-3 (1988): 1.
12. Cronin, “Thinking Long on Afghanistan,” 55.
13. Abdul Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider’s Account* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, 1988), 209. See also Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 238; Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy Since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
14. President Carter personally supported the idea and in a letter to Marshal Tito, then Yugoslavian president, supported restoration of Afghan neutrality, offering “to help guarantee Afghanistan’s true neutrality.” See “Carter Backs Afghan Neutrality,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, February 27, 1980, 1.
15. Carrington emphasized that “we have the idea of neutralization in a broad form, but there are certain paths we could follow.” *Ibid*.
16. Edith Hassman, “U.S. Foreign Policy: The View from Vienna,” *Executive Intelligence Review* 7, no. 10 (March 11, 1980), 56.
17. “Britain Gets Private Word on Afghanistan,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, March 12, 1980, 3.
18. “Permanent Neutrality and Disarmament of Afghanistan,” collection of articles from a seminar held by the Academy of Science of Afghanistan, government publication, 1989, 3.
19. The preamble read, “Creating favourable conditions for determining the legal status of permanent neutrality of Afghanistan and its demilitarization.” See the constitution of Afghanistan 1990, www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1990.html.
20. For example, the prevailing attitude in the U.S. government strongly argued that “we judge that the Najibullah regime will not long survive the completion of Soviet withdrawal even with continued Soviet assistance. The regime may fall even before the withdrawal is complete.” See “USSR: Withdrawal from Afghanistan,” Director of Central Intelligence, SNIE 11/37-88, Special National Intelligence Estimate, March 1988, 219, www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/at-cold-wars-end-us-intelligence-on-the-soviet-union-and-eastern-europe-1989-1991/16526pdf/files/SNIE11-37-88.pdf.
21. After losing parts of its territory to the Soviet Union during the Winter War (1939–40) and suffering another Soviet onslaught during World War II, Finland signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union in April 1948. The pact imposed serious restriction and costs but enabled Finland to remain outside great power conflicts by adopting a policy of neutrality, which it maintained during the Cold War. As a result, Finland did not participate in the Marshall Plan, took neutral positions on Soviet actions abroad, stayed generally away from NATO, and successfully resisted Soviet pressure to cooperate with the Warsaw Pact. For more information, see Brian S. Faloon, “Aspects of Finnish Neutrality,” *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1982): 3–12. Selig S. Harrison, “Dateline Afghanistan: Exit Through Finland?” *Foreign Policy* no. 41 (Winter 1980–81):183.
22. “The Taliban: Engagement or Confrontation?” Hearing Before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, June 20, 2000, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-106shrg68769/html/CHRG-106shrg68769.htm.
23. Peter Tomsen, “Chance for Peace in Afghanistan: The Taliban’s Days Are Numbered,” *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (2000): 179–82.
24. Another reason for Tomsen’s proposal being overlooked could be its timing during an election year.
25. Interview with former senior Afghan security officials, August–September 2013.

26. Inderfurth and Dobbins, "Ultimate Exit Strategy."
27. Daniel Dombey and Matthew Green, "US Aims To Turn Afghanistan into Neutral Zone," *Financial Times*, June 27, 2011, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/de0bcfc8-a0ff-11e0-adae-00144feabd0.html#axzz346cw8RI.
28. Ibid.
29. For more information on the Istanbul process, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan," November 2, 2011, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/4598>.
30. The "Major Non-NATO Ally" is a title given by the U.S. government under Section 2350a(f)(2) of Title 10, United States Code to strategically important allies who are not members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. MNNA status does not involve any mutual defense guarantees however it makes the country eligible for certain kinds of U.S. military assistance, including purchasing excess defense articles and participating in cooperative defense research and development projects. See "Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA)," www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/dod/mnna.htm.
31. Cronin, "Thinking Long on Afghanistan," 56.
32. "Afghanistan's Region: 2014 & Beyond, Joint Declaration on Regional Peace and Stability," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, November 17, 2013, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/10307.pdf>.
33. John Keay, *India: A History*, rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 2010). See also Sayed Qasim Reshtia, *Afghanistan in 19th Century* (Kabul: Maiwand Publishing, 2010), p. 101.
34. From edited extracts of a paper prepared by Research Department of British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/our-history/historic-views-kabul/learning-from-history/.
35. "The notion of buffer regions has existed for centuries in many forms and at varying scales. The term 'buffer state' seems to date from the British use of the term in 1883 in connection with Afghanistan. A buffer generally is situated between two or more powerful, conflicting spheres of influence; it separates the contending parties to reduce the likelihood of physical contact and conflict between them." David B. Knight, "Buffer States in World Politics by John Chay; Thomas E. Ross," *Geographical Review* 78, no. 1 (1988): 93–95, www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/214314. Successful buffers gain neutrality, strength, and independence but do not have meaningful autonomy; they must play the assigned role as peacekeeper. The existence of a buffer implies that the contending parties agree to territorial separation; if they are determined to fight, the buffer means nothing. Because power relations and thus relative location change, buffer status need not be permanent.
36. On August 31, 1907, a convention was signed between Great Britain and Russia formalizing the arrangements on Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. For the full text, see "Convention Signed on August 31, 1907, between Great Britain and Russia, Containing Arrangements on the Subject of Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet," *American Journal of International Law* 1, no. 4 (October 1907): 398–406.
37. Afghan amirs under the influence of religious and tribal leaders resisted the presence of foreign officers inside Afghanistan. For example, one of the major concessions Shir Ali Khan received from Lord Mayo in 1869 was the promise that "no European officers would be placed as Resident in his cities." See Sir Owen Tudor Burne, "British Agents in Afghanistan, (1879)," *Books in English*, Paper 12 (London: W. H. Allen, 1879). Digitized Afghanistan materials in English from the Arthur Paul Afghanistan Collection are available online at the University of Omaha, <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/afghanuno/12>.
38. A copy of the letter from King George V is printed as an appendix in Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan 1900–1923: A Diplomatic History* (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 1967), 205.
39. An editorial on page one of *Siraj al-Akhbar* reported the proclamation of neutrality on October 21, 1914. The name of the author is not specified but is assumed to be Mahmoud Baig Tarzi, the newspaper's editor in chief.
40. Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century: Relations with the USSR, Germany, and Britain* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 27.
41. It has been argued that though the history of jirgas in Afghanistan goes back centuries, the traditional Afghan elder's consultative gathering has officially been called a Loya Jirga only since 1923. See "Loya jirga-i 'umumi dar Jalalabad (1923, March 16)," *Aman-i Afghani*, 11–12; Benjamin Bucholz, "Thoughts on Afghanistan's Loya Jirga: A Myth?" *Asien* no. 104 (July 2007): 27; Jamil Hanifi, "Colonial Production of Hegemony Through the 'Loya Jirga' in Afghanistan," *Iranian Studies* 37 (2004): 295–322.
42. British India authorities had apparently promised Habibullah that if he maintained Afghanistan's neutrality and cooperated with them, the British government would grant Afghanistan full independence once the war ended, but he was offered instead only some weapons and cash. See Ghaus, *Fall of Afghanistan*, 25.
43. The full text of the convention is available at the University of Minnesota Human Rights Library at www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/1907d.htm.
44. Muhammad Siddiq Farhang, *Afghanistan dar panj qam-i akhri* [A history of Afghanistan in the last five centuries] (Alexandria, VA: Markaz Farhang Sanayi, 1988), 776.
45. See *Afghan Modern Diplomacy: The Role of Allama Mahmud Tarzi and Mohammad Vali Khan Darvazi* (Kabul: Centre for Strategic Studies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, 2009).
46. The English translations of these treaties are available in Adamec, *Afghanistan*, 188–98.
47. Ghaus, *Fall of Afghanistan*, 47.
48. Ibid.
49. *Islah* newspaper, July 8, 1931, cited in Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 321.
50. Ibid.
51. For text of the treaty, see the League of Nations Treaty Series, no. 3611, vol. 157 (1935), 370–81.
52. Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 375.
53. In 1941, Iraqi Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Gaylani invoked the Saadabad treaty and requested Afghanistan to support his country in fighting against British invasion. The Afghan government declined his request on the basis of its declaration of neutrality in 1939. See Farhang, *Afghanistan*, 646.
54. In August 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia had signed a nonaggression pact even as Great Britain prepared to confront Germany. Effectively, Afghanistan's northern and southern neighbors were on different sides of the grand conflict then emerging.

55. See Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs*, 250–51.
56. Ella Maillart, "Afghanistan's Rebirth," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 27, no. 2 (1940); see also Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 380.
57. As a conservative, pragmatic, and elderly statesman, Prime Minister Hashim was rarely, if ever, challenged on state policy matters. See Farhang, *Afghanistan*, 645.
58. The Soviet embassy in Kabul for example had invoked the 1931 treaty of neutrality and nonaggression to demand the eviction of nationals of belligerent states.
59. Ibid.
60. Peacetime neutrals avoid treaties of alliance with other states that could put them at risk of being a party to a future war or support of war preparations. Such were the policies of Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, and to some extent the United States before her entrance into World War II. See Wilhelm Wengler, "The Meaning of Neutrality in Peacetime," *McGill Law Journal* 10, no. 4 (1964): 369–80.
61. After partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, the Afghan government supported the right of self-determination for Pashtuns and Baluchs residing on the other side of the Durand Line.
62. In 1946, the United States provided its first major financial and technical assistance to Afghanistan in the Helmand Valley irrigation project. Then, in 1948, the U.S. diplomatic mission in Kabul was upgraded to a resident embassy level. Afghanistan joined the UN in 1946. Trade and bilateral cooperation with the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Japan, and Czechoslovakia also expanded. Despite these developments, however, Afghanistan remained politically isolated and diplomatically ineffective.
63. After 1955, the suffixes *mosbat* and *fa'al* were added to the Persian word *bitarafi*, reading *bitarafi mosbat* and *bitarafi fa'al*, which respectively mean positive neutrality and active neutrality.
64. Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan*, 123.
65. Sayed Qaseem Reshtia, *The Political Memoirs of Sayed Qaseem Reshtia, 1932–1992* (Virginia: American Speedy Press, 1997), 101.
66. A. R. Pazhwak, "Afghanistan's Policy of Non-Alignment," *Kabul Times*, May 21, 1962, 2.
67. Reshtia, *Political Memoirs*, 101.
68. During his visit to Kabul in 1953, U.S. vice president Richard Nixon disapproved of Daoud's position on Pashtunista. Nixon referred to Afghanistan's neutrality as equivalent to "political leprosy." A year later, U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles refused to offer any military assistance to Foreign Minister Mohammad Naim, Daoud's brother, though a huge military assistance program was approved for Pakistan. See Jeffery J. Roberts, *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 147. See also ABC-CLIO, "The Soviet-Afghan War: A Cold War Chess Piece," *History and the Headlines*, www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1193923.
69. Reshtia, *Political Memoirs*, 101.
70. Ghaus, *Fall of Afghanistan*, 109.
71. Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, "Afghanistan: Country Reader," www.adst.org/Readers/Afghanistan.pdf.
72. A top secret instruction was sent by the Soviet Foreign Ministry to its ambassadors in the nonaligned countries to counterbalance Yugoslavia's effort to convene a meeting concerning the invasion of Afghanistan. For an excerpt of the cable, see the Wilson Center Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112499>.
73. V. P. Vaidik, "Afghan Non-Alignment: Changing Faces," *International Studies* 20, no. 1-2 (1981): 239.
74. Olivier Roy, "Has Islamism a Future in Afghanistan?" in *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 210.
75. The three countries that recognized the Taliban government were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations was held by a representative appointed by the former mujahideen government that had been headed by Burhannudin Rabbani.
76. In a September 2013 meeting, Kai Eide, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Afghanistan (2008–10), recalled that when he used the term neutrality in reference to Afghanistan's future international status, President Karzai rejected the idea as "totally unacceptable." This incident is referred to in his memoir, Kai Eide, *Power Struggle Over Afghanistan: An Inside Look at What Went Wrong—And What We Can Do to Repair the Damage* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2013), 138–40. Karzai also went on record with his displeasure, expressing "reservations about a regional approach based on Afghanistan's future as a permanently neutral state." Chinmaya Gharekhan, Karl Inderfurth, and Ashley Tellis, "Reviewing the Regional Approach to Afghanistan," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2010, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/10/13/reviewing-regional-approach-to-afghanistan/1uy1?reloadFlag=1>.
77. Private conversations with current and former senior Afghan ministers, Canberra and Kabul, April–August 2013. In reality, any attempt by Afghanistan to join the containment alliance system would likely have been blocked by Pakistan.

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