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BRITISH DECISION MAKING ON THE FRONTIER
AFGHANISTAN - A CASE STUDY

(1863-1881)

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of History
and the

Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Kerry Connor Loney

April 1979

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Thesis Committee

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Chairman

11 April 1979
Date

The British Army entering Afghanistan, November 1878,
at the start of the Second Afghan War
(Illustrated London News, December 28, 1878)

Frontispiece



PREFACE

In the interests of greater comprehension a statement must be made concerning the transliteration method utilized in this thesis. Persian words which I felt should be retained are defined in parentheses at their initial appearance. For these words and proper names in both Persian and Russian I have chosen the most common English spelling.

Preparation of this thesis has taken me many miles and enabled me to share experiences with both Afghan and British friends which helped me to become, hopefully more knowledgeable, and certainly more understanding. Although I have thanked these people along the way, I am happy to have this opportunity to express my appreciation in a more permanent manner. I would like to offer a sense of obligation and gratitude to my advisor, Oliver B. Pollak, for his guidance, many suggestions, moral support and good humor. Sincere appreciation goes also to the members of my thesis committee for agreeing to work with me on a topic which does not fall under their immediate purview. I am indebted to Ms. Eloise Jackson and the Interlibrary Loan staff of the UNO library for their superb assistance in acquiring many old and unusual sources; to Thomas Gouttierre and David Champagne of

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CHAPTER I

DECISION-MAKING ANALYSIS

The Indian subcontinent provided the British their most important colonial enterprise. Management and preservation of the Indian Empire demanded the energies, in one way or another, of every branch of the British political system. In consequence, the relationship between British India and its neighbors acquired enormous significance. British involvement in Afghanistan, India's neighbor to the west, offers a unique opportunity to explore why, after one-half century of non-intervention there, the Government adopted policies which led to a war in 1878 and nearly forced the British to assume control of the country.

Classic studies of imperialism, such as the works of John Hobson, V. I. Lenin, Joseph Schumpeter, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, have tended to focus on one specific motive for expansion; for example, economic or strategic interests. The British, however, did not approach Afghanistan with direct expansion in mind. More complex forces drove them there. In recent years scholars from several disciplines within the social sciences devised a technique of analysis of decision-making

specifically designed to make the elements of very complex issues more manageable. Psychologists and political scientists initially found this method effective for its predictive potential. Members of related fields such as history, have adapted the theory of decision-making analysis to meet their particular needs.

An ideal decision-making situation requires that there occur recognition of the need for a decision, selection of an alternative and an expected result.¹ A distinctive imperial decision-making model relates these three elements to the frame of reference in which imperial decision-makers operated. On investigation seven general features of the imperial decision-making process emerge. They are: 1) strategic considerations, 2) economic maneuvers, 3) restraints produced by the organizational structure of government, 4) effects of individual personalities within the government, 5) private pressure groups such as the press and missionary societies, 6) the element of chance and, 7) the response of the "victim." The last two of the characteristics of the process are the most difficult to assess. Chance generally created situations in which those responsible made defensive decisions in response to unanticipated contingencies. Evaluation of the "victim's" response depends upon availability

¹Richard C. Snyder, H. W. Bruck and Burtin Sapin, Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, A Division of the Macmillan Company, 1962) 90.

of accurate sources not commonly produced in either the "victim" country or that of the aggressor.

The decision-making approach to the study of imperialism stresses the entire process of policy-building which often resulted in colonial expansion. No single decision generated the division of the colonial world by western nations. These policy-making processes embraced a chain of decisions made by many people for varied reasons. John Cohen, in Behavior in Uncertainty and its Social Implications, aptly described the decision-making process as a "bridge between thinking and doing."² The act of making a decision involves three separate groups of activities: predecisional information gathering, choice-making and execution.³ Each of these activities involves specific questions. For example, what factors did the decision-makers consider relevant during the data collecting period; what parameters did they use to determine the pertinence of those factors; what goals did they choose, why did they choose these objectives and what source did they utilize?⁴ The final choice indicates that the decision-makers have settled their differences and

²John Cohen, Behavior In Uncertainty and Its Social Implications (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964) 141.

³Snyder, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, 9

⁴Ibid., 66.

accept accountability.⁵ How and why they selected a particular alternative assumes particular significance by uniting all three elements of the process. That those involved regarded their choice as successful or not becomes less important than why they considered it such. Their personal evaluation permits invaluable insight into the character of their goals.

David Miller and Martin Starr, in The Structure of Human Decisions, have argued that human beings rarely choose the optimum alternative when making a decision. They tend rather to favor a solution adequate to solve the immediate problem but one without any potential to preclude future similar difficulties.⁶ Indecision necessitates decision. Doubt about an existing situation precipitates a new decision in order to eliminate uncertainty. The fact that new decisions result from prior ones further limits the number of alternatives available.⁷ In turn, choices with only short-range problem solving potential provoke future decision-necessity situations. The effectiveness of a decision, however, need not be judged in terms of its "goodness." A decision may be rational in a policy-making sense while not "good" by

⁵Ibid., 91.

⁶David W. Miller and Martin K. Starr, The Structure of Human Decisions (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967) 50.

⁷Snyder, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, 90

humanistic criteria. The decision-maker evaluates a decision's rationality by its usefulness.⁸ For example, a government may decide to withdraw its program of aid from a less-developed nation because the recipient government has adopted a political ideal antagonistic to the donor. The decision, while perhaps not a "good" one for the people of the poorer country, is rational in the sense that it provides a tool for bargaining to the developed nation. There are no "good" decisions; only effective and ineffective ones. This concept permits easier comprehension of seemingly unfeeling decisions.

Political decision-making analysis endeavors to observe the activities and methods of those governed and thereby to draw some categorical conclusions about these functions and the people who performed them.⁹ This information permits the construction of typologies, grouping of functions similar under certain circumstances,¹⁰ or "dimensions"¹¹ of the potential political behavior of both organizations and the individuals within.¹² These

⁸Wayne Lee, Decision Theory and Human Behavior (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1971) 7-9.

⁹Glenda Goldstone Rosenthal, The Men Behind the Decisions: Cases in European Policy Making (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975) 1.

¹⁰Snyder, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, 27.

¹¹Russell N. Cassel, The Psychology of Decision-Making (North Quincy, Mass.: The Christopher Publishing House, 1973) 37.

¹²Snyder, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, 44, 55.

typologies furnish the basis for a model of the political decision-making process. This abstraction allows implicit assumptions to be drawn from the general information collected about the organizational structure and its members and then applied to specific decision-making circumstances.¹³ Typologies consist of variables which make synthesis less complicated and accordingly decrease anti-thesis.¹⁴ These groupings reveal deviations in the behavior of decision-makers which call attention to unusual conditions necessitating special investigation.¹⁵

Two categories of variables comprise the imperial decision-making model: psychological and sociological. The psychological variables involve the behavior of the decision-makers under particular political circumstances¹⁶ and their behavior as it related to the system to which they belonged -- the sociological variables or machinery of government.¹⁷ Therefore, analysis of behavior focuses on the conduct of government organizations themselves and on some relevant aspects of the personal and professional training of its officials.

¹³Colin Edin and John Harris, Management Decision and Decision Analysis (London: The MacMillan Press, 1975) 78.

¹⁴Ibid., 102.

¹⁵Snyder, Foreign Policy Decision-Making, 3

¹⁶Ibid., 27.

¹⁷Ibid., 41.

The rules of the organization in many ways govern the decision-maker's choice. Each individual, however, defines those rules in accordance with his own experience because this procedure constitutes learned behavior like any other such process.¹⁸ Several factors influence the learning process. First, the decision-maker's education and professional training inculcate in him the ethics of culture. Extended association with peers intensifies common attitudes until the group position becomes the individual's.¹⁹ In Africa and The Victorians²⁰ Robinson and Gallagher pointed out that with the "collective mind," the integrity of the group takes precedence over that of the individual. Information external to career life, such as that from childhood experiences, also influences the making of decisions.²¹ In many cases, however, and particularly in nineteenth century Britain, government organizations attracted such similar types of people that those events often correlated with the professional ethic.

¹⁸Ibid., 161; Cassel, Psychology of Decision-Making, 79.

¹⁹Muzafer Sherif, In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Group Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966) ix; Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1957) 16.

²⁰Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1961) 19-21.

²¹Rosenthal, The Men, 136-37; Simon, Administrative Behavior, 16.

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The sociological variables strongly affect the psychological by providing the framework in which the latter operate. The following definition illustrates the extent to which the organization controls its associates. "An organization is a social system explicitly set up to influence its members towards the achievement of some goal."²² The nature of the institution and its purpose, as well as its associations with other organizations, control the decision-making behavior of its members by supporting certain attitudes towards success and its criteria and by determining the amount of authority given to each member.²³ Although it is true that "the whole is different from the sum of its parts," these "parts" derive their relevance from their relationship to the machinery of government.²⁴

The explicit influence of the organization on the goal-seeking competence of its associates, in fact, increases their effectiveness. Consideration of the entire spectrum of standards when choosing an alternative poses an unmanageable problem. The decision-maker

²²Peter B. Smith, Groups Within Organization: Applications of Social Psychology to Organizational Behavior (London: Harper and Row, 1973) 1.

²³Sir Geoffrey Vickers, The Art of Judgement: A Study of Policy Making (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965) 115.

²⁴John D. Aram, Dilemmas of Administrative Behavior (Englewood Hills, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976) 3-4.

facilitates his task, therefore, by selecting from within the goals of his organization.²⁵ He appears to do this even when strong incompatibility arises between the aims of his organization and those of society at large.²⁶ The impact of party politics on imperial decisions illustrates this point quite well. The decision-maker ultimately assumes the organizational objective as his own because his future success depends on that of the organization.²⁷

Decisions, like those who make them, become a part of a larger process. Thus they cannot be examined in isolation. In fact, decisions necessitated under spectacular conditions well may be the least indicative of the dispositions which directed policy-making.²⁸ Policies emerge in continued reaction to events and the people who produce those events. Routine decisions exerted more influence and therefore provide a better expression of general trends in policy-making.

In retrospect, one fact often appears to have prompted a decision and to have had a greater impact on the choice made than any others. Numerous scholars have discussed the effect of economic necessities on imperial

²⁵ Sherif, In Common Predicament, 16; Simon, Administrative Behavior, 12-13.

²⁶ Simon, Administrative Behavior, 13-14

²⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁸ John Cell, British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Policy-Making Process (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) xi.

decision-making but have ignored the influence of government structure and the personalities within that structure.

CHAPTER II

IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY

An understanding of the structure of the British Colonial government is essential to establish the hierarchy of authority, the interrelationships between its branches and also to provide an idea of the kinds of personalities who made and executed decisions. John Cell, in his study of British Colonial Administration, contended that the "collective mind" exerted influence both in London, the center of imperial policy-making, and 'in the field' itself.¹ This composite perception evolved from the general ambiance of the nationalistic imperialism often associated with nineteenth century Britain. The British Civil Services during the nineteenth century developed into a highly organized governing facility which presumed its fellows would serve their country guided by ideals which transcended class favoritism or shifts in governmental leadership. This concept of British officials as servants of the nation rather than the government well may have been a chimera. If so, some specific investigation into the organization of the

¹Cell, British Colonial Administration, 215.

British government in the late nineteenth century and its members becomes imperative. As Sir Geoffrey Vickers emphasized in his study of the role of personal judgement in policy creation, "the individual decider can no more be studied in isolation than the individual decision. The mental activity and the social process are indissoluble."²

Numerous offices of the British government shared responsibility for colonial administration. The Colonial Office supervised the affairs of actual colonies while the Foreign Office directed the Protectorate regions. The secretary of state for India and his council managed the most important of Britain's colonial undertakings.³ Many other divisions of government, beginning with the Crown, influenced the making of imperial policy.

The Crown

The Crown possessed no officially specific authority over the formulation of colonial policy. Nonetheless, Queen Victoria demonstrated a profound interest in the control of her colonial empire, unlike many of her predecessors.⁴ Her satisfaction with the Disraeli Ministry

²Vickers, The Art of Judgement, 15.

³Paul S. Reinsch, Colonial Government: An Introduction to the Study of Colonial Institutions (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926) 288.

⁴Henry L. Hall, The Colonial Office, A History (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1937) 69.

versus her displeasure with that of Gladstone illustrates the direction she preferred vis-a-vis imperial policy. The charm and peculiar glamour of parts of the Empire, especially India and the Orient, aroused the "Victorian" romanticism of both the Queen and Disraeli.⁵ The Queen's ready acceptance of Disraeli's proposal that she assume the title of Empress of India in the face of staunch resistance from his opponents exemplifies her fondness for the exotic.⁶

Queen Victoria endorsed a forceful foreign policy. Although not actively a warmonger, she accepted the contemporary belief that armed opposition offered the only creditable solution when another Power threatened the frontiers of Britain's Empire.⁷ This philosophy explains her increasing hostility toward Russia as that nation maneuvered closer and closer to British India and menaced Britain's footing in the East. Consequently, Victoria's support of the Turks in 1878 ensued from her antagonism towards Russia rather than from affection for the dying

⁵Frank Hardie, The Political Influence of Queen Victoria 1861-1901 (London: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1935; reprint ed., London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1963) 42.

⁶Carl A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism (Printed by arrangement with Glydendalske Boghandel, Copenhagen; New York: Howard Fertig, 1968) 124.

⁷Hardie, Queen Victoria, 169, 174.

⁸Ibid., 161.

Ottoman Empire.⁸ Victoria wrote to Disraeli in the same year that if she were a man "she would like to go and give those Russians, whose word I cannot believe, such a beating! We shall never be friends again til we have out. This the Queen feels sure of."⁹ Disraeli took advantage of her mood to encourage the appointment of Salisbury as Secretary of State by assuring her of his anti-Russian stance.¹⁰

The Queen primarily disliked Gladstone for his cautious approach to foreign policy and his consequent opposition to Disraeli. She held Gladstone personally responsible for the potential of war with Russia in 1878 and therefore strongly resisted his appointment as Prime Minister in 1880.¹¹ In the general election of 1880, however, the public gave him an overwhelming vote of confidence which increased the Queen's hostility.¹²

Near the end of the war with Afghanistan (1881) Victoria opposed Gladstone's desire to end British occupation of the city of Kandahar. He wished to free England from any further involvement in Afghanistan while she

⁸Ibid., 161.

⁹George Earle Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, 1876-1881, vi (London: John Murray, 1920) 217.

¹⁰Ibid., 229.

¹¹Hardie, Queen Victoria, 68.

¹²Ibid., 71.

strove to retain a link she felt would protect India's western frontier. Her objection to Kandahar's abandonment deadlocked the January 5th Council meeting at which the Prime Minister planned to announce the release. When he finally made the statement an observer reported he had never seen the Queen so enraged. "She would not," she complained, "be an Emperor William to Gladstone's Bismarck."¹³

The relationship of the Queen with Disraeli and Gladstone reveals both her influence and her impotence. On the one hand, she could insure the appointment of a sympathetic cabinet official. On the other, she stood powerless before a Prime Minister with a satisfied populace behind him. The vicissitudes of government, however, caused the people's contentment with their officials to vary widely while the Crown persevered. A dramatic occurrence easily upset a prime minister and his party especially when he often had opposed the Crown. The aftermath of General Gordon's defeat at Khartoum (1885) demonstrated the Monarch's still active political influence. Victoria blamed Gladstone for the fiasco for sending Gordon back to Africa in the first place. The Gladstone Government did not fall immediately but it lost a great deal of the public's confidence and collapsed shortly thereafter on a budget bill.¹⁴

¹³Ibid., 75-76.

¹⁴Hardie, Queen Victoria, 84-85.

Prime Ministers

The prime minister enjoyed no more legal authority than the other members of the cabinet. The position had evolved through time as the business of government became more complicated. As chief executive and leader of the cabinet the prime minister guided the formation of policy. As the leader of his party, however, he exerted the most influence. Party policies often became British policy. Therefore, the efficacy with which the prime minister presented and supported those ideas determined the fortune of his party.¹⁵

Two very individualistic men led the British government during the period of involvement in Afghanistan in the late 1870s and early 1880s: Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield) and William Ewert Gladstone. Disraeli¹⁶ served as Prime Minister in 1868 and again from 1874 to 1880. Gladstone held the office four times - 1868 to 1874, 1880 to 1885, 1886 and 1892 to 1894.¹⁷ Both Disraeli, a Conservative, and Gladstone, a Liberal, fostered the goals of their respective Parties and brought the force of these opinions to policy creation. As a result, the two

¹⁵Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution (Washington: M. Walter Dunne, 1901) 79-80.

¹⁶For purposes of clarity Lord Beaconsfield will be referred to as Disraeli.

¹⁷F. Maurice Powicke and E. B. Fryde, eds. Handbook of British Chronology (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1961) 109.

different Governments differed widely in foreign policy, especially on colonial matters.

Essentially Disraeli aspired to make England impressive to the world through her Empire. At his death his Secretary of State, Salisbury (1874-1880), observed that his chief's "zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life."¹⁸ Adherence to Conservative Party principles ranked just after his sense of duty to country. Personal ambition, of which he possessed a great deal, stood third.¹⁹

Carl A. Bodelson, in Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, argued that the acceptance of the Disraeli Government by the British public in 1874 indicated their growing attraction to "national self-assertiveness."²⁰ Disraeli saw an opportunity in the British reaction against the former Government's separatist policies to weaken Liberal opposition. He created a cause celebre -- the enhancement of Britain's world position.²¹ This issue would forward both the goals of his country and his party. Disraeli appreciated better than Gladstone the subtleties of party politics. He realized the heightened

¹⁸Buckle, Disraeli, -

¹⁹Carl A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, 87.

²⁰Ibid., 87.

²¹Ibid., 121-22

appeal of empire at a time when much of the grandeur of England had gone. Disraeli's own interests focused his attention on the Indian Empire.²²

Disraeli's outspoken attraction to Indian matters added greatly to his reputation as a "jingo."²³ Historians also associate him with the "bombastic" school of British politicians; i.e., those who viewed expansion as an end in itself; as a means to celebrate the glory of the mother country. His relish for the trappings of Empire, such as his determination to make Victoria Empress of India, demonstrates his enthusiasm.²⁴

The prime minister, with no specific constitutional privilege, functioned rather as a guide than as a commander. Disraeli, however, assumed extensive control over government during his tenure as prime minister. George Buckle, one of his biographers, stated that Disraeli directly supervised the policies of the Foreign Office. Consequently, adversaries censured Disraeli rather than Foreign Office officials.²⁵ On the eve of the second Afghan War in 1878 Disraeli exhibited his

²²T. H. S. Escott, The Story of British Diplomacy: Its Makers and Movements (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908) 391.

²³A "jingo" is one who vehemently supports his country and advocates an aggressive foreign policy.

²⁴Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, 124.

²⁵Buckle, Disraeli, 241.

tendency to interfere. He warned Lord Cranbrook, Secretary of State for India, " there can be no cabinets now and matters must be settled by myself and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs We must control and even create events."²⁶

Gladstone, in contrast to Disraeli, concerned himself primarily in domestic affairs. "Economy at home and non-intervention abroad"²⁷ characterized his administration. These interests and his hope for European harmony²⁸ made him a separatist. Most British, however, had abandoned the doctrine of separation by 1875. In later years Gladstone defended his position saying that he had not been " insensible to the glory and responsibility of the colonial empire." He had, in fact,

. . . considered important the business of founding and cherishing these colonies in which one had so distinctly been entrusted by Providence to the care of the people of this Country that we should almost as soon think of renouncing the very name of Englishman as of renouncing the very great duties [of the colonies].²⁹

Economy became the byword of the Gladstone régime. Secretary of State Granville, a follower of

²⁶Ibid., 381-82.

²⁷John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, Africa and the Victorians, 92-93.

²⁸Agatha Ramm, ed., The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876-1886, I (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962) xviii.

²⁹Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, 126.

British economist Richard Cobden,³⁰ strenuously championed Gladstone's program to disengage Britain from foreign entanglements.³¹ Consequently, the principal of non-intervention guided Gladstonian foreign policy.³²

Disraeli and his Secretary of State held quite a different viewpoint from that of Gladstone and Granville. Salisbury described the former great Imperial Powers -- the Chinese, Spanish and Ottoman Empires, as the "dying nations."³³ He believed that new Imperial giants -- Great Britain, the United States and Russia soon would divide the colonial world. Social Darwinism³⁴ supplied for him and his many supporters the rationalism that well-developed societies had an obligation to share the benefits of their progress with less-developed peoples.³⁵ Salisbury's desire for a dynamic foreign policy added to Disraeli's reputation as an aggressive imperialist.

³⁰Cobden is known best for his support of free trade and a minimum of government involvement abroad.

³¹John Morley, The Life of William Ewert Gladstone, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1932) 595.

³²Escott, The Story of British Diplomacy, 333.

³³William L. Langer, "A Critique of Imperialism," Foreign Affairs, October, 1935.

³⁴Social Darwinism is the application of Charles Darwin's 1859 theory of natural selection to evolution within human societies. Apologists for colonialism often used this sociological adaptation to defend their activities.

³⁵Langer, British Diplomacy, 7

Salisbury's methods also provoked criticism. fundamental lack of trust in the judgement of others obliged him to work in complicated and often secret ways.³⁶ He rarely requested advice from the Foreign Office staff and frequently even neglected to inform them of events.³⁷ Even though he designed his policy to preserve Britain's rank in world affairs, he inhibited his effort by seeing things only from the perspective of Whitehall. Consequently, his methods resembled "an elaborate game of bids and counter bids [begun] and ended on the maps of Foreign Office."³⁸

The Colonial Office

The Colonial office supervised the formal possession of the Crown. It exercised no control over Protectorates,³⁹ which fell under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Office, or over the Indian Empire, the domain of the India Office. Many other areas of government did influence the administration of the colonies, however. Thus

³⁶Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, 256.

³⁷Hall, The Colonial Office, 269; Ray Jones, The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office: An Administrative History (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) 104.

³⁸Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, 257.

³⁹A situation in which protection by one nation is offered to a less powerful one in return for certain considerations such as control over foreign policy.

divisions of authority frequently provoked heated debate among the offices.⁴⁰

The position of parliamentary undersecretary topped the hierarchy of the Colonial Office. The parliamentary undersecretary advised and assisted the foreign secretary on colonial matters. His jurisdiction ranged from immigration and military business to the personal reception of all important dispatches. The permanent undersecretaries, second in line of precedence, headed the actual office staff. The parliamentary undersecretary conveyed to the Colonial Office the opinions of the Government, while permanent undersecretaries handled all the routine business.⁴¹ The importance of the permanent undersecretaries hinged on their knowledge of the mundane aspects of colonial administration. They exerted very little influence on policy-making directly but their advice often provided the basis on which their superiors made decisions.⁴² Consequently, their skill and experience, or lack thereof, had a substantial impact on policy formation.

First assistant secretaries, principal clerks and first class clerks made up the balance of the Colonial Office staff. The clerks physically administered the

⁴⁰Cell, British Colonial Administration, 38-39.

⁴¹Ibid., 7.

⁴²Ibid., 20; Reinsch, Colonial Government, 289.

routine business of the Office. Therefore the people in the Colonies felt that "the 'Mother Country' is generally synonymous with the chief clerk in the Colonial Office."⁴³

The effectiveness of the Colonial Office depended on the competence of its staff. Studies of nineteenth century Colonial Office personnel show that the majority had very little knowledge of Colonial affairs. Only two members in 1870 had had any previous experience with the colonies at all.⁴⁴ Political patronage rather than capability determined appointments prior to 1872 when the Government established the practice of open competition and examination.⁴⁵ This new selection procedure, however, did not alter the appearance of the Colonial Office roster in any appreciable way.⁴⁶ As a result, most of the Colonial Office staff throughout the nineteenth century came from similar backgrounds. They absorbed the standards and objectives of the group.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly new members soon adopted the office's opinion on colonial management.⁴⁸

⁴³Reinsch, Colonial Government, 289.

⁴⁴Hall, The Colonial Office, 27.

⁴⁵Brian Blakely, The Colonial Office (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972) 152, 159-60.

⁴⁶Ibid., 152.

⁴⁷Cell, British Colonial Administration,

⁴⁸Ibid., 39.

Other factors also frustrated the efficiency of the Colonial Office. Supervisors did not apportion the work load equitably. In addition they inhibited motivation by rarely permitting subordinates to make decisions. So little cooperation existed between departments within the Colonial Office that communication became nearly as difficult as that with other sections of the Government.⁴⁹ Telegraph communications with the colonies presented still another problem. Information by telegraph usually arrived in fragments which imparted a sense of urgency to all messages -- crucial and commonplace alike. Unprepared staff members felt required to respond immediately and thus, at times, impulsively. As a result they often created, rather than controlled, confusion.⁵⁰ In truth, the Colonial Office did not "run" the colonies. It simply reacted to events as best it could.⁵¹

The Foreign Office

The Foreign Office directed Britain's relationships with foreign nations as well as its dealings with Crown Protectorates.⁵² A parliamentary and a permanent

⁴⁹ Ibid., 24-25.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁵¹ Ibid., 24.

⁵² Jones, Foreign Office, 84

undersecretary directed its staff. The parliamentary undersecretary conducted the Consular and German Divisions and sat in the House of Commons. The permanent undersecretary supervised all of the general political business. In 1858 the Foreign Office added an assistant undersecretary to serve as an aid to the parliamentary undersecretary.⁵³

The Foreign Office, like most of its peers, introduced appointment by open competition examination during the 1860's. Nonetheless, it remained known as the "aristocratic" office long after it accepted open competition.⁵⁴ The Foreign office gave examinations only to individuals nominated by an office member until well into the 1870s.⁵⁵ Aristocrats directed its affairs. The foreign secretary and parliamentary undersecretary nearly always came from one of Britain's foremost families. Offspring of noble families comprised the greater part of its staff.⁵⁶ The aristocratic bias of the Foreign Office made it always the last branch of the British Civil Service to accept modernization plans.⁵⁷

⁵³Ibid., 71.

⁵⁴Ibid., 41.

⁵⁵Ibid., 61.

⁵⁶D. C. M. Platt, Finance, Trade and Politics in British Foreign Policy, 1815-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) xxvi.

⁵⁷Escott, The Story of British Diplomacy, 367-368.

The examination required by the Foreign Office in the 1870's appeared on the surface more rigorous than those given by the other offices.⁵⁸ The difficulty of the entrance examination, however, did not produce a leveling effect on the ranks because there was no open competition. The results of a study published by Ray Jones in The Nineteenth Century Foreign Office - An Administrative History showed that only seven (7) out of sixty three (63) appointees had earned first class university honors degrees.⁵⁹ A second survey revealed that seventy seven (77) out of one hundred and sixty one (161) members of the Foreign Office staff either were directly or closely related to Peers. Jones' investigation also indicated homogenous educational experiences among personnel in the nineteenth century. Forty eight (48) had completed their prep school work at Eton. Sixty four (64) attended either Oxford or Cambridge University.⁶⁰ The similarity of social and educational exposure of Foreign Office employees molded a group with common principles and goals like its Colonial Office counterpart. No doubt these collective biases affected Foreign Office policy-making.

The Foreign Office also suffered from poor distribution of responsibility. The foreign secretary

⁵⁸Jones, Foreign Office, 5

⁵⁹Ibid., 64.

⁶⁰Ibid., 165, 188.

frequently gave the most sensitive assignments to his favorite undersecretary.⁶¹ Salisbury, when Foreign Secretary, consulted none of the Foreign Office staff on important matters. According to one of the copyclerks, Salisbury created a "Secret Department" made up of his private associates, such as his personal secretary. Clerk Martin complained that Salisbury's failure to trust his staff caused "very serious mischief and great inconvenience" in the Foreign Office.⁶²

The Consular Service

The Consular Service, although technically a division of the Foreign Office, differed from it in several ways. The title of D. C. M. Platt's study of the Consular section, The Cinderella Service, implies one of its fundamental shortcomings. If the persona of Cinderella denoted the Service, the Foreign Office played well the role of the intolerant stepmother. Platt contended that the Consular Service did not perceive this subservience to its parent department "where social distinctions and snobberies were really important."⁶³

This patronizing conduct of their superiors intensified the Consular section's other problems. For

⁶¹Jones, Foreign Office, 1

⁶²Ibid., 104.

⁶³D. C. M. Platt, The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825 (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971) 1.

example, appointment by patronage endured there long after other departments accepted open recruitment.⁶⁴ Few officials expected a consul to have any specific skills or educational prerequisites. Lord Palmerston once remarked that any man could perform a consul's function as long as he had that nebulous quality called "good sense." Unavoidably, maxims like that of Palmerston brought many undistinguished but socially acceptable young men to the Service.⁶⁵ For example, only thirty-four (34) of the eighty-two (82) consuls in 1900 successfully completed the qualifying examination. More significantly, the examination was simple, uncompetitive and irrelevant because, for the most part, the Foreign Secretary chose the appointee.⁶⁶

Poor staff selection accounted for only one of the Consular Corps' inadequacies. The Service rarely provided its new staff with satisfactory training.⁶⁷ Once a consul went to his post, the Foreign Office had no means to evaluate his performance. The consul's despatches and memoranda provided the Office with its only source of information. These obviously subjective reports made

⁶⁴Ibid., 21.

⁶⁵Ibid., 23.

⁶⁶Ibid., 25; Escott, The Story of British Diplomacy, 377.

⁶⁷Platt, The Cinderella Service, 26

appraisal difficult at best.⁶⁸ The absence of salary and promotion schedules for the Consular Services created another barrier to incentive. Consul's salaries, forty or fifty years out of date, were so inadequate by the late nineteenth century that a private income had become mandatory.⁶⁹ This requirement for supplementary funds severely limited the field of potential candidates. No explicit promotion policy existed nor did the Service offer any bonuses or honours.⁷⁰ A consul in Puerto Rico once protested, "no system could be more depressing to the hopes and spirit of the corps, or more detrimental to its zeal for the public service" ^{„71}

The India Office

The British government shifted control of the Indian Empire from the East India Company to the India Office following the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The Company had dealt principally with the mercantile aspects of the Empire. The new administration presided over both the economic and political spheres.⁷² Its complex duties required a staff larger than the other divisions

⁶⁸Ibid., 63.

⁶⁹Ibid., 38-39; Escott, The Story of British Diplomacy, 377.

⁷⁰Platt, The Cinderella Service, 48.

⁷¹Reinsch, Colonial Government, 291.

⁷²Ibid.

of Colonial government. The government of India consisted of two separate divisions -- the secretary of state for India and his council in London and the viceroy (governor-general) and his council in India. The secretary's council numbered between ten and fifteen men, most of whom had served at least ten years in India,⁷³ either in the Civil Service or as soldiers, engineers or merchants. They provided advice to the secretary of state who rarely possessed extensive familiarity with the Indian Empire. The Council had no power to initiate business. Power to do so belonged only to the secretary of state for India. Constitutional tradition however required the secretary to inform his council of all business.⁷⁴ Only matters of expenditure and nomination to office demanded majority sanction.⁷⁵ The secretary, however, could authorize very large expenditures without the council's approval⁷⁶ and could overrule a vote of dissent as long as he recorded his reasons.⁷⁷ The secretary also personally oversaw all issues relating to foreign nations, war, British practices

⁷³Sir John Strachey, India: Its Administration and Progress (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1903) 67.

⁷⁴Reinsch, Colonial Government, 292.

⁷⁵Strachey, India, 67; Reinsch, Colonial Government, 292-93.

⁷⁶Strachey, India, 68.

⁷⁷Reinsch, Colonial Government, 293.

with regard to Indian native States and any other matters of secrecy.⁷⁸

The secretary of state for India frequently carried on secret correspondence with the viceroy. Despatches on such topics as the three-way relationship between British India, Russia and Afghanistan rarely went before the Council. In truth, council members received little more information on sensitive issues than did the public.⁷⁹ The council's utility lay in its member's experience which generally far outweighed that of the secretary, the viceroy or the council in India.⁸⁰

The Crown appointed the viceroy and the members of his council. The prime minister and secretary of state usually selected the candidate for viceroy.⁸¹ By the 1870s the office of viceroy had developed into an important but ambiguous position. As one observer wrote in 1880,

I never tire of looking at a Viceroy. He is being so heterogenous from us! He is the centre of a world with which he has no affinity. He, who is the axis of India . . . is necessarily screened from all knowledge of India. He lists no syllable of any Indian tongues; no race or caste or mode of Indian life is known to him.⁸²

⁷⁸ Strachey, India, 68.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 72.

⁸¹ Ibid., 52.

⁸² Philip Woodruff, The Men Who Ruled India, vol. : The Guardians (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954) 77.

The case of Lord Robert Lytton, Viceroy from 12 April, 1876 to 8 June, 1880, elucidates some of the characteristic weaknesses of Indian viceroys. Lytton initially refused the viceroyalty on the grounds of ill-health and his "absolute ignorance of every fact and question concerning India and total want of experience in every kind of administrative business."⁸³ The nature of Lytton's health problems to which he referred as his "complaint" remains somewhat mysterious. He apparently suffered from neuralgia, respiratory and back ailments.⁸⁴ In any case, his condition induced difficult periods of severe depression exaggerated by bad climate, tense situations and prolonged mental activity. He had declined the governorship of Madras in 1875 for these same reasons. One year later, however, he finally accepted the viceroyalty⁸⁵ with its attendant exhausting weather, complicated internal problems and increasingly fragile relationships with Russia and Afghanistan. On the occasion of Lytton's nomination Lord Derby, Secretary from 1874 to 1878, prophesized, "He

⁸³Aurelia Brooks Harlan, Owen Meredith: A Critical Biography of Robert, First Earl of Lytton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946) 214.

⁸⁴Lady Betty Balfour, Personal and Literary Letters of Robert First Earl of Lytton. I, (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1906) 85, 273.

⁸⁵Harlan, Owen Meredith, 214.

will die there; but die Governor-General. Perhaps it is worthwhile."⁸⁶

The viceroy's council, like that of the secretary for India, served him mainly in an advisory capacity.⁸⁷ He divided responsibility among council members according to experience but normally handled all matters of foreign relations himself.⁸⁸ The Royal Instructions for the India Government obliged the viceroy to confer with his council on all important business. They gave him, however, discretionary powers as wide as those held by the secretary of state for India. The viceroy could disregard or even overrule his council on critical or secret matters as long as he recorded his defense.⁸⁹ On occasion a viceroy countermanded his council as a matter of judgement, as when Lytton abrogated a part of the India import duty on English cotton over the heated protests of his council.⁹⁰

The amount of "extra" authority given to colonial "men-on-the-spot" raises important questions about imperial administration. In the case of the Indian Empire the

⁸⁶Marquis of Zetland, ed., The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929) 409-410.

⁸⁷Cell, British Colonial Administration, 5'

⁸⁸Strachey, India, 61.

⁸⁹Sir Anton Bertram, The Colonial Service (Cambridge at the University Press, 1930) 23; Cell, British Colonial Administration, 59.

⁹⁰Strachey, India, 62.

secretary of state had supremacy over the viceroy but he resided thousands of miles away in London. Communications remained largely ineffective even with the advent of the telegraph. The viceroy often reacted to events in India aware that urgency excused quick decisions; that, if necessary, he could use the pretense of delayed instructions to protect his actions.⁹¹ Sometimes a viceroy intentionally made decisions contrary to Home government policies. At other times he did so out of ignorance. These decisions, regardless of motive, forced the Home government either to accept, and thus approve, a situation of which it disapproved or to recall the refractory official.⁹² Spontaneous decisions of these "men-on-the-spot" often eclipsed the wishes of their superiors at home.⁹³

The India Office did attempt to restrain the independent conduct of its servants abroad. Lytton once complained to Indian Secretary Cranbrook about the position of the council. "The disposition of that Council," Lytton claimed, "is to reject summarily every proposal, however important, or however trivial, which emanates from

⁹¹Cell, British Colonial Administration, 45

⁹²Buckle, Disraeli, 371.

⁹³Cell, British Colonial Administration, 4

the Government of India ."⁹⁴ Never, Lytton assured Cranbrook, would he interfere with his provincial governors in this manner.⁹⁵ The tendency to ignore the instructions of superiors clearly applied also to Indian officials below the viceroy, once described as "choleric, eccentric, warm-hearted men, who did not always pay attention to Government orders."⁹⁶ Appropriation of authority by colonial officials occurred in all parts of the British Empire. In India, however, it was most conspicuous. The importance of India and its great distance from the Home government contributed to an atmosphere of greater freedom. Secondly, the Charter Act of 1853, which prohibited appointment to the Indian Civil Service by patronage, kept it from becoming as aristocratic as the Foreign or Colonial Offices. Consequently, it preserved a more diverse and individualistic character than the rest of the Civil Service.⁹⁷

The Treasury

The Office of the Treasury influenced imperial

⁹⁴Lytton to Cranbrook, 30 April 1878 in C. H. Philips, W. H. L. Singh and B.N. Pandey, eds., Select Documents on the History of India and Pakistan, IV: The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947, (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) 16.

⁹⁵Ibid. 17.

⁹⁶Woodruff, The Men Who Ruled India, 15.

⁹⁷Emmeline W. Cohen, The Growth of the British Civil Service 1780-1939 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1941) 81.

policy-making in a subtle way. The rapid escalation of expenditure in the years following the Crimean War (1854) provoked resolute movement toward fiscal retrenchment. The expense of the British government by 1874 reached twice that of twenty years earlier.⁹⁸ The Treasury acquired the potential to modify policies which required heavy expenditure. Evidence indicates, however, that the Treasury customarily capitulated to the prime minister's wishes. No specific guidelines regulated the Treasury's behavior in such matters thus, when under pressure, it found acquiescence more expeditious than strict principles.⁹⁹

Under a compatible prime minister such as Gladstone, who typified Victorian frugality, the Treasury could influence policy.¹⁰⁰ In other circumstances, the Treasury waited until the Government adopted a policy before interposing its veto. In this way it reduced the likelihood of the policy's proponents to win support. This practice "caused departments to try to outwit them instead of cooperating."¹⁰¹

Each of the branches of the British Colonial government had a reasonably well-defined area of jurisdic-

⁹⁸Maurice Wright, Treasury Control of the Civil Service 1854-1874 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 329.

⁹⁹Ibid., 335, 338-339.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 329.

¹⁰¹Hall, The Colonial Office, ~

tion. In practice, however, one department often found it necessary to interfere in the bailiwick of another. The Government had no consistent parameters to regulate conflicts of interest. So many contingencies existed which disturbed the administration of a policy that, at times, there seemed to be no policy at all. The inexperience of a clerk who neglected to send a dispatch promptly, the rashness of a colonial governor, the exigencies of party politics or an insurrection somewhere in the Empire -- any one of these conditions and many others could neutralize the best laid plan. Moreover, the structure and procedures of the British Colonial government often prevented the construction of sound programs. Hence, many uncertainties modified the creation, the application and the results of a policy.

AFGHANISTAN -- A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER III

Unmasterly Activity

The British experience in Afghanistan affords a unique setting in which to examine the intricacies of British policy-making. Economic and strategic interests played a fundamental role in attracting the British. The promise of economic rewards initially propelled the British into the Indian subcontinent. Under East India Company direction India became the most significant trade center of the empire. It served as a link between other colonial possessions, serving as a place to garrison and reprovise troops for expeditions to other parts of the British Empire.¹ Consequently, the preservation of the "noblest trophy of British genius, and the most splendid appanage of the Imperial Crown"² generated an intense concern for the security of India's western neighbor Afghanistan. Imperial tacticians regarded Afghanistan, and

¹James Gervais Lyons, Afghanistan The Buffer State: Great Britain and Russia in Central Asia (London: Luzac and Company, 1910) 7.

²George Nathaniel Curzon, Russia in Central Asia in 1899, and the Anglo-Russian Question (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1889; Reprint ed., New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1967) 14.

particularly the city of Herat, as the major deterrent to a Russian invasion of the Indian Empire. Herat crowned the traditional avenue of assault. The road from Herat led to India by way of the city of Kabul, the Khyber pass and on through the Northwest Frontier Provinces.³ The tribal regions of these latter presented British strategists with their gravest cause of apprehension.⁴

Unlike many areas of the colonial world, Afghan history revealed a rich and highly developed culture. The principles of nineteenth century Social Darwinism seem antithetical to a people whose tenth century ruler Sultan Mahmud was " the greatest military captain of the time, and his capital at Ghazni was resplendent with marble palaces while the London of England and Harold was no more than a muddy village."⁵ The Afghans shared belief in Islam, one of the world's major religions, and paid at least nominal allegiance to a central authority. The British then could not justify their interference in Afghanistan solely in the name of civilization. Afghanistan, however, did share a characteristic geopolitical importance with other areas attractive to the British in

³ Pio-Carlo Terenzio, La Rivalité Anglo-Russe en Perse et en Afghanistan Jusqu'aux Accords de 1907 (Paris: Rousseau and Company, 1947) 39.

⁴ A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch, eds., The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919, vol. III, ch. 2: "Forward Policy and Reaction, 1874-1885" by A. W. Ward (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923) 72.

⁵ Arnold Fletcher, Afghanistan, Highway of Conquest (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965) 35.

the latter nineteenth century. Afghanistan's geopolitical position between the Russian and Indian empires required a policy designed to maintain it as a buffer.

While few mid-nineteenth century British policy-makers encouraged colonial expansion, they had a great concern for existing possessions,⁶ especially the Indian Empire. The annexations by 1843 of the Sind and Punjab regions brought British India into virtual contact with Afghanistan.⁷ The India government treated its western neighbor like a sphere of influence without benefit of a formal agreement.⁸ Activities to produce such an agreement between the British government and the rulers of Afghanistan in the fall of 1837 had not only failed but had caused a disastrous war in 1839-41. Britain's concern about Afghanistan as a potential vulnerable area between India and Russia provides an important and understandable explanation for their intervention in the 1870s and 1880s. However it is an insufficient explanation for the construction of policies which led to a second war with Afghanistan.

Dost Mohammed, who took the title "amir" rather

⁶Platt, Finance, Trade and Politics, 354-55.

⁷Sir John Miller Adye, Indian Frontier Policy: An Historical Sketch (London: Smith, Edler and Company, 1897) 21.

⁸Bishwar Prasad, The Foundations of India's Foreign Policy, 1860-1882 (Bombay: Orient Longmans Ltd., 1955) 43.

than "shah" to give himself religious superiority, traveled to Peshawar in January 1857 to discuss with East India Company officials an agreement to reinforce the modest but friendly bond between Afghanistan and Britain.⁹ The British had pledged not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan in return for a pledge by Dost Mohammed two years earlier to "be the friend of the friends and enemy of the enemies of the Honourable East India Company."¹⁰ The Treaty drafted in 1857 added an award of one lakh of rupees per month and 400 muskets to the Amir for the duration of his war with Persia to reclaim the city of Herat. Dost Mohammed agreed to receive British officials to supervise the distribution of the grant at locations where his army met to attack Persia. The British promised to prohibit involvement of their representatives in either the direction of the Afghan army or the country's internal matters. They also agreed to remove their officials at the end of the hostilities with Persia but would retain the right to send a non-European vakeel (agent) to the Amir's court at Kabul

⁹D. P. Singhal, India and Afghanistan 1876-1907: A Study in Diplomatic Relations (St. Lucia: Queensland: University of Queensland, 1963) 7.

¹⁰Treaty between the British government and His Highness Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan, 30 March 1855 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), "Correspondence Respecting the Relations between the British government and that of Afghanistan since the Accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan, 375.

and possibly one to Peshawar. Article 11 clearly specified that this Treaty supplemented but did not supplant the Treaty of 1855.¹¹

Dost Mohammed died in July 1863. Royal succession on the death of an Afghan ruler rarely followed in an orderly manner. Dost Mohammed's personal choice of his third son, Shere Ali, guaranteed little. War erupted almost immediately after his death. The British government avoided direct acknowledgement of Shere Ali but maintained their vakeel at his court in case he did overcome his elder half-brothers, Mohammed Afzal and Mohammed Azim.¹² Dost Mohammed knew the struggle that would occur between his sons at his death and had warned the British against involvement.¹³ The Afghans expected these endemic power struggles. They viewed them not as real civil war but as the appropriate means to determine which candidate had the strength to rule their turbulent country.¹⁴

For the next six years the British government

¹¹Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 195.

¹²India Government to Sir Charles Wood, 28 July 1863, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 377.

¹³Ibid., Memorandum by Sir John Lawrence, 434; Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government and Its Results (London: The National Press Agency, 1878) 6.

¹⁴M. Hasan Kakar, "A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan in the Reign of Amir 'Abd Al Rahman Khan 1880-1901" (Manuscript completed at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 1974) 56.

recognized whichever brother seemed in control at Kabul. Three years after the death of their father, Afzal and Azim drove Shere Ali from Kabul to Herat where he remained until 1868. Shere Ali's defeat and his savage reaction to it caused the British to express doubts both about his ability to regain power and his sanity.¹⁵ The British played off brother against brother, hinting to Azim he could expect support if he held Kabul,¹⁶ while recognizing Shere Ali as Amir of Herat; a gesture insulting to the hereditary heir of Dost Mohammed.¹⁷ The British formally acknowledged Afzal as Amir of Kabul and Kandahar in early 1867 and requested him to submit his acceptance of the Treaties concluded by the British with his father.¹⁸ The death of Afzal in October left Azim as ruler in Kabul.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Shere Ali, in the summer of 1868, retook Kabul and Kandahar.²⁰

All three of Dost Mohammed's sons had approached

¹⁵Thornton to J. W. S. Wyllie, 15 February 1867 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 387.

¹⁶The Times (London), October 18, 1877.

¹⁷Demetrius C. Boulger, Central Asian Questions: Essays on Afghanistan, China and Central Asia (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1885) 57.

¹⁸Indian Foreign Department to Cranbrook, 28 February 1867, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 386.

¹⁹Ibid., Pollock to T. H. Thornton, 16 October 1878, 397.

²⁰Stephen Wheeler, The Ameer Abdur Rahman (London: Bliss, Sands and Foster, 1895) 46-47.

Russia for support in their internecine rivalry.²¹ Although the Russians declined, Shere Ali held particular resentment toward the British for turning their back on him when he most needed encouragement. The flight of Abdur Rahman, son of Mohammed Afzal, into Russian territory made British approval essential to the new Amir.²² The British Vakeel in Kabul relayed Shere Ali's complaint that:

. . . from the British Government I have received comparatively no friendship or kindness with reference to my success in this miserable civil war, until God almighty of his own favour has again bestowed upon me the country of my inheritance.²³

The wavering policy of the British toward Afghanistan resulted from a wish to 'put their nickles in the right basket' Their indecision succeeded, however, only in alienating the Afghans. An article in the Fortnightly Review, ascribed a policy it dubbed "masterly inactivity" to Sir John Lawrence, Viceroy of india from 1864 to 1869.²⁴ Opponents of Lawrence accused him of refusing

²¹The Times (London), October 19, 1877.

²²Mohammed Ali, Afghanistan (The Mohammedzai Period: A Political History of Afghanistan From the Beginning of the 13th Century, with Emphasis on Foreign Relations) (Lahore: Punjab Educational Press, 1959) 70.

²³Translation of a Letter From the British Vakeel at Kabul to the Commissioner of Peshawar, September, 1868, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 416.

²⁴The Earl of Northbrook, The Afghan Question: Speech of the Earl of Northbrook in the Guildhall, Winchester, on the 11th of November, 1878 (London: National Press Agency, Limited, 1878) 4-5.

to interfere in Afghanistan under any circumstances in order to maintain the status quo.²⁵ For this reason "masterly inactivity" took on an increasingly pejorative connotation. In spite of its reputation, Lawrence's approach did not exclude all advances to the Kabul Government. For instance, when Shere Ali had secured Kabul and Kandahar, Lawrence provided Shere Ali an urgently needed grant of 60,000 to keep the Amir's troops faithful and to "bribe the other side."²⁶

Lord Mayo succeeded Lawrence as Viceroy of India in December 1868. Shortly after his arrival in India he invited Shere Ali to Amballa to discuss the future relationship between Afghanistan and Britain.²⁷ At the first meeting on 27 March the participants conferred on a potential trade agreement. The British reiterated their promise to leave the internal concerns of Afghanistan to its ruler.²⁸ The Conference at Amballa formulated an "intermediate" policy. The British offered friendship

²⁵ Munawwar Khan, Anglo-Afghan Relations 1798-1878: A Chapter in the Great Game (Peshawar: University Book Agency, 1964) 89; Ram S. Rastogi, Indo-Afghan Relations 1880-1900 (Lucknow: Nay. Jyoti Press, 1965) 102.

²⁶ Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Forty-One Years in India: From Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief, II (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1897) 45.

²⁷ Memorandum by T. H. Thornton to W. S. Seton-Karr, 9 March 1869, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 460-61.

²⁸ Ibid., India Foreign Department to the Duke of Argyll, 3 April 1869, 462.

and support to the Amir, hinted at possible money and arms subsidies dependent, however, on their discretion, and mollified his fears concerning Russian movement near his northern borders. They refused, however, either to establish a fixed subsidy or to acknowledge formally his chosen heir.²⁹ The meetings at Amballa accomplished little more than a restatement of the Treaties of 1855 and 1857.

The outcome of the Amballa Conference profoundly disillusioned the Amir. His original offer to go all the way to Calcutta to meet with British representatives indicated he expected more.³⁰ He had hoped to secure a more binding defense treaty against the Russian threat and gain recognition for his heirs.³¹ Only the British promise not to send British (European) envoys to Afghanistan pleased Shere Ali. His Chief Minister Syud Nur Mohammed unfortunately set a dangerous precedent at the meetings when he commented that "...the day might come when the Russians would arrive, and the Amir would be glad, not only of British officers as agents, but of arms and troops to back them"³²

²⁹ Ibid., India Foreign Department to the Duke of Argyll, 1 July 1869, 466.

³⁰ Prasad, India's Foreign Policy, 122.

³¹ Henry B. Hanna, The Second Afghan War, 1878-79-80. Its Causes, Its Conduct and Its Consequences, I (Westminster and London: Constable and Company, 1910) 293-94.

³² Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, 49-50

The policies which conditioned the British attitude at Amballa changed slowly. Sir Henry Rawlinson, a prominent expert on Asian affairs,³³ emerged as the foremost opponent of non-intervention. He first published his views in 1865 in the Quarterly Review where he argued Britain's prerogative to protect the route to India via Herat and Kandahar. While a member of the Council of India in 1868 Rawlinson presented a Memorandum to the Secretary of State in which he detailed Russian incursions into the Turkestan region just north of Afghanistan especially into the territory of Bokhara (fig. 3). The traditionally close relationship between the governments of Kabul and Bokhara, he claimed, permitted him to speculate on the possible ramifications of a Russian presence in Bokhara. He particularly feared Russian agitation of the Moslem animosity toward India. He concluded that further neglect of Afghanistan would encourage Russian access to Kabul. Rawlinson urged the India government to end its policy of vacillation, openly support Shere Ali with subsidies and send a European envoy to the Amir's Court. In short, he recommended a return to the quasi-protectorate status Britain had maintained in Afghanistan in the 1850's.³⁴

³³Fletcher, Highway of Conquest, 117.

³⁴Memorandum on the Central Asian Question to the Government of India by the Secretary of State, 21 August 1868, in SP, LVI Afghanistan (1878), 405-13.

The India government rejected Rawlinson's proposals. Lawrence defended his restraint during the war between Dost Mohammed's sons by recalling the Amir's own advice before his death.³⁵ He conceded the acceleration of Russian movement in Central Asia but discounted Britain's right to challenge it until the threat became direct. Active involvement in Afghanistan might lead to occupation - a circumstance those who remembered the first war ardently hoped to avoid.³⁶ He did not believe Shere Ali's behavior evidenced any hostility toward Britain. On the contrary, the Amir frequently repeated his resolution to preserve the friendly relations with Britain established by his father and promised never to seek help from another Power.³⁷ W. H. Norman, former Secretary to the India Military Department, contributed two further reasons to veto a "forward" move into the Northwest frontier. First, the frontier tribes would scorn British regulations. Secondly, interference surely would arouse the independence of the tribes and cause considerable friction.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., Memorandum by Sir John Lawrence, 434.

³⁶ Ibid., Government of India to the Duke of Argyll, 4 January 1869, 417-19.

³⁷ Ibid., Memorandum on Paper by Sir Henry Rawlinson on Central Asian Progress of Russia, 421.

³⁸ Ibid., Minute on the Subject of the Progress of Russia in Central Asia, and of the Defense of Our North-West Frontier by W. H. Norman, 8 December 1868, 444.

Extensive debate on the security of the Northwest Frontier developed in London as well as India. Those who previously favored non-intervention now advised a slight relaxation of that policy in the form of subsidies to Shere Ali to confirm the Treaties of 1855 and 1857.³⁹ Rawlinson's recommendations found new supporters in Parliament.⁴⁰ Reactivation of a proposition by General John Jacob in the 1860s, produced an argument which occupied military advisors for a number of years.⁴¹ Jacob, Frere and Rawlinson suggested engineering the border areas into a more "scientific" frontier, one with all major inroads secured as the best line of defense.⁴² That would involve troops at all the strategic mountain passes and require the good will of the border tribes along the way.

Sir Robert Sandeman was the "man-on-the-spot" most directly responsible for replacing the old "close border" system with open involvement in the affairs of the border

³⁹ John Dacosta, A Scientific Frontier: or, The Danger of a Russian Invasion of India (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1891) 5-6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁴¹ C. Collin Davies, The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908, with A Survey of the Policy Since 1849 (Cambridge University Press, 1932; reprint ed., London: Curzon Press, 1974) 8.

⁴² Ibid., 16; William P. Andrew, India and Her Neighbors (London: William H. Allen and Company, 1878) 1-2.

tribes.⁴³ The British had sent Sandeman to Biluchistan to arbitrate in the continual tribal conflicts which made travel there extremely dangerous. He concluded a treaty with the Khan of Kelat at Jacobabad on 8 December 1876 which made Quetta, its surrounding area and the Bolan pass a British leasehold (fig. 2). The Khan continued as its nominal ruler but the India government took over supervision of the region. Since the eighteenth century Amirs of Kabul had exercised a degree of authority over Quetta, one of the most strategic spots in Biluchistan.⁴⁴ Sandeman's influence there caused Shere Ali apprehension about the future intentions of the British. British occupation of Quetta alarmed the Russian government as well.⁴⁵ The Marquis of Salisbury, Secretary of State for India, instructed the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg to remind the Russian Government of an 1854 Treaty with the Khan of Kelat which permitted them to locate troops in his territory.⁴⁶

A Memorandum by Sir Bartle Frere in 1876 drew the

⁴³Richard Isaac Bruce, The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1900) 2-3.

⁴⁴Davies, The Problem of the North-West Frontier,

⁴⁵Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 30 March 1875 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), "Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," 479.

⁴⁶Ibid., Sir L. Mallet to Lord Tenterdon, 3 May 1875, 479.

attention of the British government to the Sind and Punjab areas of western India. Frere criticized the frontier policy for permitting the men there to bear arms and resolve their own disputes. The people of the Sind and Punjab acknowledged the Amir of Kabul as their nominal ruler, although their affairs fell under the influence of the British in India. The Indian government had recognized neither the Amir's authority nor had it impressed its own control. Frere felt that the Indian government must place the regions directly under its jurisdiction to properly protect the frontier.⁴⁷ Shortly after, the Viceroy announced the placement of parts of the Sind (Jacobabad, Thool and Kusmore) under the Governor of the Punjab.⁴⁸ The Secretary of State supported the decision of the Viceroy and his Council because the tribes along the frontier severely limited trade.⁴⁹

The British had constructed a number of semi-independent states along the Northwest frontier of India by 1857 (fig 2). They provided these states with security and mediation for their frequent feuds in exchange for

⁴⁷Memorandum by Sir Bartle Frere on the Sind and Punjab Frontier Systems, 1876 in SP, LVIII, Biluchistan No. 3 "Papers Relating to the Reorganization of the Western and North-Western Frontier of India," 26-27.

⁴⁸Ibid., Proclamation, India Foreign Department, 1876, 20.

⁴⁹Ibid., Despatch From the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy in Council, 23 March 1877, 7.

their loyalty.⁵⁰ Most Indian officials believed that the new frontier policy successfully reduced both the number and the effects of disputes in the border areas.⁵¹ In contrast, reliable sources indicated that bribery, more often than mediation, quieted intra-tribal conflicts.⁵² The possible suspicions British involvement might generate in the minds of native rulers produced criticism of the policy. Indeed, such relationships with the British government in neighbouring territories had led inevitably to total annexation.⁵³

The growing Russian presence in Central Asia precipitated the increased British commitment on the Indian frontier (fig 3). British assessment of Russian intentions varied widely. Many observers saw Russia's moves as the natural reaction to the "force of circumstances;" a concept shared and similarly acted upon by the British. The Russians had the same right as the British to subdue the 'barbarous' peoples on their frontiers. member of the House of Commons, hearing of the Russian

⁵⁰Prasad, India's Foreign Policy, 256.

⁵¹Adye, Indian Frontier Policy, 25.

⁵²Sir George Campbell, "The Afghan Frontier: Substance of a Speech Not Delivered" (London: Edward Stanford, Printed for Private Circulation, 1879) 47.

⁵³The Duke of Argyll, The Eastern Question: From the Treaty of Paris 1856 to the Treaty of Berlin 1878, and to the Second Afghan War (London: Strahan and Company, Ltd., n.d.) 225.

suppression of Khiva said he hoped they would now see
'...this nest of robbers, those scourges of humanity,
reduced to order and civilization."⁵⁴ A game of chess
ensued in which each Russian move provoked a counter-
advance by Britain.⁵⁵ The difference between the policies
of Russia and Great Britain, as perceived by the British,
lay in the habit of the St. Petersburg government to deny
positively an intended maneuver until it became a fait
accompli. Russian insincerety created an almost manic
fear in some British minds. The British believed the
Russian government allowed their Central Asian officers
a much wider latitude than did the British. An article
in Blackwood's Magazine claimed that the Russian Govern-
ment knew little about the actual activities of their
representatives in Central Asia and often learned of
aggressions via the British Foreign Office.⁵⁶ Substantial
evidence suggested that once a Russian official subjugated

⁵⁴ Bouchier Wrey Savile, How India Was Won By
England Under Clive and Hastings (London: Hodder and
Stoughton, 1891) 289.

⁵⁵ Asghar H. Bilgrami, Afghanistan and British
India 1793-1907: A Study in Foreign Relations (New Delhi:
Sterling Publishers (P) Ltd., 1972) 169; See also: Archi-
bald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: The Struggle for
Asia (London: Harper and Brothers, 1900) 161; Savile, How
India Was Won, 289; Percy M. Sykes, Sir Mortimer Durand,
A Biography (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1926) 80;
Ward, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy,
75.

⁵⁶ "The Afghan War and Its Authors," Blackwood's
Magazine, January 1879.

an area, the Government acceded. In the event of a miscarriage, it disavowed all knowledge of the officer's plans.⁵⁷ Another opinion circulated that the Russian government frequently sent officers "under a cloud" to Central Asia. As a result, the officers turned the advantages of distance and turmoil in the khannates of Central Asia into a means of redemption.⁵⁸

Conservative Party members exploited the Russian threat to force through bills Parliament normally would have rejected.⁵⁹ They excited feeling with accusations of apathy which aroused the tendency of the British public to see Russia as their traditional enemy as they had France for so long.⁶⁰ They easily found support in people who had heard repeatedly that Russia longed for the wealth of India.⁶¹ Opponents argued that Russia would not

⁵⁷Great Britain, Parliament, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, CCXLII, 505; Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, 316-17; Reinsch, Colonial Government, 54.

⁵⁸The Times (London), October 16, 1877; Alexis Krausse, Russia In Asia: A Record and A Study 1558-1899 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1899) 134-35.

⁵⁹Royce Eugene Walters, "Across the Khyber Pass: British Policy Towards Afghanistan, 1852-1857," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1974) 467-68.

⁶⁰W. E. Baxter, England and Russia in Asia (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Company, 1885) 11.

⁶¹Michael Edwardes, Playing the Great Game: A Victorian Cold War (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975) 85-86; Joseph Popowski, Trans. Arthur Baring Brabank, Charles E. D. Black, ed., The Rival Powers in Central Asia, or, The Struggle Between England and Russia in the East (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1893) 69.

attempt an invasion of India because the great distance and rugged terrain made provisioning an army nearly impossible. Nor would the Indian peoples accept the Russians since the reforms following the 1857 Mutiny.⁶²

The Russian siege of Tashkend in 1865 sounded the initial alarm in the British camp (fig. 3). The Russian Foreign Minister Prince Gortchakov issued a circular in reply to British queries in which he denied that Russia intended any major annexations in Central Asia. He assured the British Russia would continue their policy of deference to the integrity of Afghanistan and Persia.⁶³ The Russian campaign at Tashkend so disturbed the Amir of Bokhara, however, that he imprisoned the Russian agent sent to explain the operation.⁶⁴

The Russians successfully subdued Tashkend in 1867, Samarcand in 1868, and reestablished their dominance in Bokhara (fig. 3). The British government continued to accept Russian assurances of respect for Afghan independence.⁶⁵ They did request their representative at St. Petersburg, however, to remind the Russian Government that

⁶²Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, II, 319, 323-325; Krausse, Russia in Asia, 163.

⁶³Boulger, Central Asian Questions, 166.

⁶⁴Ibid., 172-73.

⁶⁵Gortchakov to Brunnow, 14 February 1869 in SP, LXXV, Central Asia No. 2 (1873), "Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," 713.

It could prove very difficult to control its representatives who were a great distance from the capital. Lord Clarendon, British Foreign Secretary, recalled how in India," there was always some frontier to be improved, some broken engagement to be repaired, some faithless ally to be punished; and plausible reasons were seldom wanting for the acquisition of territory."⁶⁶ Russia might find herself in a similar position - "however unwillingly."⁶⁷

The increase of Russian activity in Central Asia provoked the British by the spring of 1869 to suggest a formal agreement concerning Afghanistan. The Russian government initially proposed that they regard Afghanistan as a buffer zone between the two Empires. The inadequately delimited borders of Afghanistan, however, made it unsuitable. The Council of India recommended the upper Amu Darya (Oxus) as the southernmost limit of Russian territory and Khiva as the neutral zone. Russia disagreed on the grounds that the Khan of Khiva would act belligerently towards them thinking he had become immune to their interference.⁶⁸ The Russian Imperial government also admitted that it did not trust the Government of

⁶⁶ Ibid., Clarendon to Arthur Buchanon, 27 March 1869, 713.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Clarendon to Horace Rumbold, 17 April 1869, 713.

India to carry out the Home government's policies. At St. Petersburg Arthur Buchanon guaranteed the Russians the Viceroy could not authorize major enterprises without the permission of his superiors in London. Nonetheless, he added, a Russian troop movement into Afghanistan no doubt would arouse the British public to demand a new policy towards Russia.⁶⁹ Gortchakov insisted his Government acted solely in defense of their commercial interests in Central Asia.⁷⁰ Moreover, he claimed the Emperor would return Samarcand to the Amir of Bokhara as soon as viable.⁷¹ Rumor reached the British in late November of a planned Russian expedition against Khiva, the projected neutral zone.⁷² Once again the Prince stoutly denied the report.

A rift between the Amirs of Kabul and Bokhara over the areas of Badakshan and Wakhan disturbed the progress of negotiations between Russia and Britain. Dost Mohammed had annexed Badakshan in 1859 (fig. 1). At his death in 1863 the Amir of Badakshan approached Bokhara for assistance in gaining independence from Kabul. The Amir of

⁶⁹Ibid., A Buchanon to Clarendon, 27 July 1869,
713.

⁷⁰Ibid., Clarendon to Buchanon, 3 September 1869,
713

⁷¹Ibid., Buchanon to Clarendon, 2 November 1869,
713.

⁷²Ibid., Buchanon to Clarendon, 18 November 1869,
713.

Bokhara refused but friction between Badakshan and Kabul continued.⁷³ The Russian government pressed for a reassessment of the relationship.⁷⁴ Viceroy Mayo, in January of 1870, received information that Bokhara planned to invade Badakshan. He urged the Government to ask Russia to stop the invasion.⁷⁵ He learned the following day that Bokharan troops had retired⁷⁶ but relations between Kabul and Bokhara further weakened because both sheltered political rivals of the other. Refuge to Abdur Rahman by the Amir of Bokhara particularly annoyed Shere Ali.⁷⁷ The Russian government responded by instructing their Governor of Tashkend, General Kaufmann, to behave according to the agreement with the British on Afghanistan.⁷⁸

Kaufmann wrote to Shere Ali explaining that Abdur Rahman's presence at Tashkend implied no threat.⁷⁹ The message greatly troubled the Amir. He told the British Vakeel he could not understand why a Russian would

⁷³Ibid., 1 December 1869, 713; Buchanon to Clarendon, 29 December 1869, 713.

⁷⁴Ibid., Forsyth to Buchanon, 5 November 1869, 713.

⁷⁵Ibid., Viceroy to Duke of Argyl, 23 January 1870, 713.

⁷⁶Ibid., Viceroy to Duke of Argyl, 24 January 1870, 713.

⁷⁷Ibid., Clarendon to Buchanon, 26 March 1870, 713.

⁷⁸Ibid., Buchanon to Clarendon, 5 April 1870, 713.

⁷⁹Literal Translation of Letter from Kauffman to Ameer, in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 636.

communicate directly with him given his protective friendship with the British; especially as this particular Russian official harbored his most bitter enemy. He refused to reply without the advice of the British government.⁸⁰ Aitchison, the India government's Foreign Department Chief, thought Kaufmann's letter duplicitous. He recommended they request the Russian government to forbid the Governor to communicate directly with Shere Ali. Lord Mayo disagreed, however, and advised the Amir to answer Kaufman in a conventional manner.⁸¹ The Amir complied but remained apprehensive about Russian designs on his hard won kingdom.

The British government settled on an acceptable boundary for northern Afghanistan in 1872. Badakshan and Wakhan constituted the northeastern limits of Afghanistan. In the northwest the line consisted of the area along the Amu Darya known as Afghan Turkestan. To the extreme northwest they included Aksha, Seripool, Maimana, Shiburghan and Andhoi in the territory of the Amir of Kabul. The desert lands there remained in the hands of the independent Turcomans.⁸² The Russian government

⁸⁰ Ibid., Major Pollock to Mr. Thornton, 26 May 1870, 634.

⁸¹ Ibid., Viceroy to Ameer Shere Ali Khan, 24 June, 1870, 633. Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 159-60.

⁸² Granville to Loftus, 17 October 1872 in SP, LXXV, Central Asia (1872), 693.

objected to the inclusion of Badakshan. General Kaufman advised that the formal placement of Badakshan and Wakhan under the sovereignty of the Amir of Kabul would threaten the neighboring khannates; especially Khokand. This path, he warned, "would lead him [Shere Ali] straight into collision with Russia."⁸³

The British and Russian governments did agree that the Amu Darya beginning at its junction with the Kokcha and running to Khodja Saleh (fig. 1) delineated the northern boundary of Afghanistan.⁸⁴ Differences over Badakshan and Wakhan persisted until Prince Gortchakov, in early 1873, concluded that the British superior means to obtain accurate information made this a "question of detail." England's support of Shere Ali, both material and moral, assured him the Amir would behave as the British counseled.⁸⁵ The Border Agreement of 1 January 1872 reiterated the delimitations accepted the previous year and recognized Badakshan and Wakhan as part of Afghanistan.⁸⁶ In addition, the Russian Government reaffirmed its promise to regard Afghanistan as completely beyond

⁸³Ibid., Kauffman to Gortchakov, 29 November 1872, 693; Gortchakov to Brunnow, 7 December 1872, 693.

⁸⁴Ibid., Gortchakov to Brunnow, 7 December 1872, 693.

⁸⁵Ibid., Gortchakov to Brunnow, January 1873, 692.

⁸⁶S. S. Thorburn, Asiatic Neighbours (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1894) 112-13.

the limits of its influence.⁸⁷

Russia annexed all of the right bank of the Khanate of Khiva precisely six months later.⁸⁸ The British did not greet the subjugation of Khiva with a great deal of alarm. On several occasions the Khan of Khiva had imprisoned and executed Russian citizens and in other ways outrageously defied his powerful northern neighbor.⁸⁹ The takeover had significance, however, because Khiva dominated the Amu Darya;⁹⁰ a fact which reminded Shere Ali that Russia had as much power as Britain.⁹¹ Russia subdued Khokand in 1875, completing control over Russian Turkestan.⁹² Only the Amu Darya separated Afghanistan from Russian dependencies (fig. 3).

The British government reserved the right to mediate in any dispute between Persia and Afghanistan in conformity with a treaty between Britain and Persia in

⁸⁷William Habberton, Anglo-Russian Relations Concerning Aghanistan, 1837-1907 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1937) 32-33.

⁸⁸George Bruce Malleon, History of Afghanistan From the Earliest Period to the Outbreak of the War of 1878 (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1878) 436.

⁸⁹Boulger, Central Asian Questions, 146.

⁹⁰Ibid., 159.

⁹¹Ibid., 60.

⁹²Loftus to Derby, 15 March 1876, in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 524; Prasad, India's Foreign Policy, 149.

1857.⁹³ Lord Mayo persuaded Shere Ali to permit the delimitation by a British commission of a boundary between Afghanistan and Persia; the controversial Sistan desert region.⁹⁴ The Commission, led by Major-General Fredrick Goldsmid, arrived in March 1872. Persia and Afghanistan had exchanged portions of the Sistan for years. The Persians had moved east as far as the Helmand river after the death of Dost Mohammed.⁹⁵ The assassination of Lord Mayo in February 1872 left the new Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, to deal with the Commission's decision. Northbrook arranged a meeting with the Afghans at Simla in July 1873 to explain the outcome of the border inquiry and also to answer the Amir's questions about British defense plans in the face of Russian advances.⁹⁶ British representatives assured Shere Ali's Envoy, Syud Nur Mohammed, they trusted Russia to abide by its agreement to refrain from interference in Afghanistan. They then acquainted him with the Goldsmid Award. Persia would retain a small island surrounded by the Hamun and Helmand rivers but no territory east of the Helmand.⁹⁷ The Commission awarded

⁹³ Prasad, India's Foreign Policy, 59.

⁹⁴ Mohammed Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 74.

⁹⁵ Prasad, India's Foreign Policy, 57, 59.

⁹⁶ Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 July 1873 in LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 482.

⁹⁷ Government of India, Foreign Department A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, compiled by C. V. Aitchison, XIII, (Central Publication Branch, 1933) 210.

to Afghanistan a 100 mile strip of land along the east bank of the Helmand. The Award pleased neither party. The Persians had hoped to keep land acquired east of the river, while the Afghans felt all the Sistan rightfully belonged to them.⁹⁸ The decision made plain to Shere Ali that Anglo-Afghan interests dovetailed only when it served the interests of the British.⁹⁹ The Amir began to reevaluate his foreign relations. The British also gave Shere Ali ten lakhs of rupees, 15,000 Enfield and 5,000 Snider rifles. He demonstrated his new skepticism by refusing to withdraw the money from the Kohat treasury where the British deposited it.¹⁰⁰ The British Government had ignored his expressions of fear, showed him no favor in return for his subservience in foreign matters and, so far, offered him no permanent remuneration. Russian communications expressed a very friendly attitude. Shere Ali well may have felt he could profit more directly in the short run from an association with Russia.

Shortly after the Simla meeting, Shere Ali announced the designation of his younger son, Abdulla Jan, as his heir.¹⁰¹ Yakub Khan, his elder son, had revolted

⁹⁸Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 139; W. J Eastwick, Lord Lytton and the Afghan War (London: R. J Mitchell and Sons, n.d.) 54-55.

⁹⁹Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 76.

¹⁰⁰Grants to the Ameers, 3 March 1882 in SP XLVIII, Afghanistan, 449-51.

¹⁰¹Boulger, Central Asian Questions, 187.

against him several years earlier, fled to the Sistan and captured Herat. Father and son reunited a year later and the Amir, on Lord Mayo's advice, made Yakub Governor of Herat.¹⁰² Yakub returned to Kabul as soon as he heard of his brother's selection as heir. Shere Ali imprisoned him in fear he would lead a second revolt.¹⁰³ At the time of the reconciliation between Shere Ali and his son, General Kaufmann wrote expressing pleasure but also assuring the Amir he understood his position.¹⁰⁴ He wrote again at the nomination of Abdullah Jan to congratulate Shere Ali on his decision.¹⁰⁵ Lord Northbrook, on the contrary, advised the Amir to observe the terms of the petition to come to Kabul made by Yakub in order that the Amir might, "maintain his good name and the friendship of the British government."¹⁰⁶ The coercive nature of Northbrook's note made the flowery accolades of Kaufmann very attractive. Shere Ali, very aware of the problems of securing a throne in Afghanistan, realized the need for a strong ally for his successor. The British did not appear inclined to offer that support.

¹⁰²Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 138.

¹⁰³Boulger, Central Asian Questions, 188.

¹⁰⁴Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 161.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 173.

¹⁰⁶Foreign Secretary, Calcutta to Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, 17 November 1874 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878) 500.

The Amir continued to treat the British as his protector. Reports of a Russian plan to invade Merv (fig. 3) provoked him once again to complain to the British. The British government subtly suggested to the Russian that an attack on Merv might precipitate their interference.¹⁰⁷ Prince Gortchakov denied the report. He did admit, however, that continued harassment by the Merv Turcomans would necessitate disciplinary measures.¹⁰⁸ The Russians clearly did not intend to practice non-interventionist policies in their frontier regions. Their actions required serious reassessment in London.

The British government chose not to interfere on behalf of any of Dost Mohammed's sons in their struggle to win dominance at Kabul. Thus it was chance which made Shere Ali the victor. Strategic and economic forces obviously played a decisive role in the gradual moderation of Britain's reticent approach toward Afghanistan. Individual personalities within the government provided the impetus for all these policies. Lord Lawrence based his policy of non-interference on personal beliefs and experiences. In the same way, Rawlinson and Frere advocated a more aggressive approach. The relative freedom enjoyed by the India government within the structure of the

¹⁰⁷Granville to Loftus, / January 1874 in SP, LXXVI, Russia No. 2, C. 919, 176.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., Gortchakov to Brunnow, 17 February 1874, 179-81.

British Civil Service made possible its initial disregard of criticisms by the "Forward Party." Their success in making Afghanistan a political issue, thus drawing in the public, forced the government to alter slightly its preferred policy. The "victim" responded with some skepticism but also a great deal of hope.

CHAPTER IV

LORD LYTTON AND THE FORWARD POLICY

Disraeli's conservative government replaced the Gladstone Ministry in 1874. The parochial tendencies of the Liberals¹ yielded to a Government which openly cultivated the Empire and its management.² Disraeli's allusions to Lord Salisbury's Russophobia convinced the Queen to accept his nomination as Secretary of State for India. Salisbury, soon after taking office, instructed Northbrook to raise the question of sending British agents to Kabul.³ Salisbury believed native agents could not provide the information necessary for efficient and productive relations. He questioned the effect of personal and religious prejudices on the selection of information reported. Consequently, he directed the Viceroy to arrange for the reception of a British Agent at Herat, possibly also at Kandahar, but not at Kabul because of

¹Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, 92.

²Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, 124.

³Argyl, The Eastern Question, 346.

the "fanatic violence" there.⁴

On receipt of Salisbury's instructions, Northbrook posted a despatch explaining that he and his Council felt the time not yet propitious to insist on the reception of a British official in Afghanistan. Salisbury agreed to a three to four month postponement. Northbrook delayed his final recommendation for nearly five months while he and his Council deliberated. He informed the Secretary in June that in their opinion the Vakeel furnished reliable and adequate information. No concrete evidence existed of Shere Ali's amenability to a European agent. Northbrook concluded that the animosity of Shere Ali's subjects made the proposal too dangerous even if the Amir personally agreed.⁵

The Viceroy, his Council and other India officials supported the Vakeel's contention that he fulfilled his function as well as possible.⁶ The Vakeel, Atta Mohammed, explained he provided a complete account of events in Afghanistan but the Government had not asked him to analyse these events nor did he consider it prudent to include confidential facts in written correspondence.

⁴Salisbury to Governor-General of India, 22 January 1875 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), "Correspondence Respecting the Relations Between the British Government and that of Afghanistan Since the Accession of The Ameer Shere Ali Khan," 502.

⁵Ibid., Viceroy to Salisbury, 7 June 1875, 503.

⁶Argyl, The Eastern Question, 449.

Northbrook forwarded Atta Mohammed's statement to Salisbury adding his and his Council's agreement on the fruitlessness of reporting the many rumors which freely circulated in Afghanistan.⁷ Salisbury, without consulting his Council, disregarded these protests and ordered Northbrook to comply with his original orders.⁸ The Amir steadily expressed alarm about Russia. The British must wait no longer to take advantage of his willingness to cooperate.⁹ Salisbury's actions, although somewhat questionable, were not unusual. He frequently neglected to inform his Council of business because he preferred to work in this cryptic manner. Because of this and other tensions between himself and Salisbury,¹⁰ Northbrook resigned the Viceroyalty in early 1876.¹¹

Disraeli appointed Robert Lytton to the Viceroyalty, a man who confessed little knowledge about the Indian Empire but who enthusiastically endorsed the

⁷Hanna, The Second Afghan War, 90.

⁸Duff, The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government and Its Results (London: The National Press Agency, Limited, 1878) 17.

⁹Salisbury to the Governor General of India in Council, 19 November 1875, in Great Britain, Foreign Office, Confidential Prints 539, 3870, "Correspondence Respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia," 98D-98E.

¹⁰Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 188.

¹¹Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 78.

Government's new assertive foreign policies.¹² The choice of Lytton, by nature impetuous, seemed an odd one to many observers. A year later Disraeli wrote to Salisbury that:

. . . had it been a routine age we might have made...a more prudent selection, but we foresaw what would occur, and indeed saw what was occurring; and we wanted a man of ambition, imagination, some vanity, and much will - and we got him.¹³

Salisbury delivered instructions to Lytton prior to the new Viceroy's departure for India. He explained that Lytton must move to strengthen the weakened condition of British influence in Afghanistan. He directed him to find a legitimate but minor reason to send a temporary mission to the Amir to demonstrate the British government's concern for his anxieties and to offer him support against external dangers. Lytton must convince Shere Ali of the necessity for maintenance of British agents at effective observation points. Salisbury suggested Lytton send the mission on the pretense of announcing the Queen's assumption of the title Empress of India. The Secretary authorized the Viceroy to arrange subsidies to Shere Ali in return for his acceptance of a legation. He cautioned Lytton, however, against making any fixed financial agreements. Salisbury also empowered the Viceroy to assure Shere Ali the British would recognize de facto rulers and

¹²Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 1'

¹³Buckle, Disraeli, 379.

would support him against unprovoked external intimidation.¹⁴

Several letters written by Lytton in his first months as Viceroy revealed his analysis of the situation in Afghanistan. While still on board ship to India he wrote to Bartle Frere that he generally agreed on the impracticality of the current border arrangement. But he did not feel prepared to require Shere Ali to accept a permanent legation at Kabul. On the other hand, Lytton conjectured, if the Amir rejected a mission, the Government would know where it stood with him.¹⁵ In a letter to the British Resident at Nepal he offered his conviction that the non-interventionist policies of former Governments had reduced British influence on both the Northwest Frontier and in Afghanistan. The vulnerability of Afghanistan's geographical position necessitated the protection of one of the two great Powers it separated. The British must take steps to keep it from falling under Russian hegemony. He would not insist on a permanent British agent at Shere Ali's Court because he felt Herat more strategically located. The British could not guarantee aid against aggression unless they could keep an envoy

¹⁴Salisbury to Government of India, 28 February 1876 in Great Britain, India Miscellaneous Public Documents, Political and Secret Despatches to India, B.P. 7/6, II, 9-18.

¹⁵Lytton to Frere, 26 March 1876 in India Office Library, Lytton Collection, "Letters Despatched," Mss Eur E 218, 43-50.

at Herat. The new Viceroy agreed that "one hand washes another" but he felt that "it is now time for the Ameer to shew [sic] us some of his soap."¹⁶ In a letter to his friend John Morley, Lytton metaphorically described the old policy as:

. . . putting all our eggs into one basket; publicly proclaiming that, if those eggs are broken, we cannot make an omelette; and taking no precaution whatever¹⁷ to keep this precious basket under our own arm.

Lytton began taking those precautions almost immediately after his arrival in Calcutta. He dispatched his native aide-de-camp, Rissaldar Khanam Khan, to Kabul to advise Shere Ali of his plan to send Sir Lewis Pelly to Kabul or to a place suggested by the Amir.¹⁸ Shere Ali acknowledged the new Viceroy but rejected the proposal for a meeting in Afghanistan because he considered the agreement reached at Simla in 1873 adequate. He did agree to send an envoy to commit these arrangements to paper.¹⁹ A letter from the British Vakeel accompanied the Amir's clarifying Shere Ali's motives for refusal. He could not insure protection of Europeans in his country

¹⁶Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 449.

¹⁷Balfour, Personal and Literary Letters, II, 29.

¹⁸Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 534; Owen Tudor Burne, British Agents in Afghanistan (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1879) 30-31.

¹⁹Ameer of Cabul to Commissioner of Peshawawr, 22 May 1876 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 548-49.

and acceptance of a British mission would demand he receive a Russian.²⁰

The Amir had sound reasons to resist a British mission. His people harbored intense hostility toward the British resulting from their interference in Afghanistan in the 1830s.²¹ Factions opposed to Shere Ali and his friendship with the British might easily cause trouble in hopes of creating a rift.²² The British assured the Amir, however, that the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1873 would prevent the Russians from demanding reception of a mission. The Amir doubted British reliance on the word of the Russian Government. If they trusted it they would not be so anxious to send a deputation to him.²³ Finally, the Amir feared a British agent might interfere in his business by attempting to mediate for disaffected Afghans. He had seen this happen in the Indian States and did not wish such a fate.²⁴

A few British officials did appreciate the extremity of the Afghan aversion to European Agents. Major-General J. Low had written in 1857 that a successful

²⁰ Ibid., British Agent Cabul to Commissioner of Peshawar, 22 May 1876, 549.

²¹ Burne, British Agents, .

²² Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 133.

²³ Ibid., 85.

²⁴ Ibid., 88.

British mission to Afghanistan could not happen until all Afghans who remembered the events of 1838-40 had died.²⁵ Even then their children kept the memory alive. The Afghan Chief Minister Syud Nur Mohammed's reflection when reminded of his ill-fated comment at Simla illustrated the gravity of the situation. He wrote, "it was as much as an order for my death."²⁶

The British attempted to overcome Shere Ali's excuses by requesting several of his British acquaintances clarify their position and stress the advantages of a mission to him.²⁷ Syud Nur Mohammed replied, however, that the Amir would not receive British agents, that former Viceroy had promised the British would not require it and all conscientious British officials advised against such a demand.²⁸

In early July the Commissioner of Peshawar informed Shere Ali of Lytton's refusal to accept an Afghan envoy in lieu of a British delegation to Kabul. He exhorted the Amir not to force the Viceroy to consider Afghanistan "a State which has voluntarily isolated itself

²⁵Canning Minute - Minute by the Honorable Major-General J. Low, February 1857, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 751-52.

²⁶Eastwick, Lytton, 43.

²⁷Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 541.

²⁸Northbrook, Afghan Question, 3

from the alliance and support of the British Government."²⁹ Shere Ali's repeated references to assurances of former Viceroys did little to diminish Lytton's expectations. He now regarded the Amir" as suspicious, discontented and untrustworthy."³⁰

The Viceroy's Council did not support him unanimously. Three members -- Sir Henry Norman, Sir Arthur Hobhouse and Sir William Muir - disagreed with Lytton on the Amir's right to refuse the mission.³¹ In his notice of dissent Norman stated he saw nothing in the current state of affairs which necessitated insistence on the mission against the will of the Amir. Hobhouse agreed with Muir on the Amir's prerogative to preserve his autonomy.³² They based their dissent on the validity of the Amir's inability to provide adequate security. Moreover, insistence was fruitless unless Lytton planned to meet refusal with military power; an option they deprecated.³³

²⁹ Commissioner of Peshawar to Ameer of Cabul, July 1876, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 550.

³⁰ LC, "Correspondence Respecting the Relations between the British Government and that of Afghanistan Since the Accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan," C. 2190, Mss Eur E 218/11, 165.

³¹ Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 79; See Also: Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 172; Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 17.

³² Arthur Hobhouse, 15 June 1876 in LC, "Cabul Correspondence," Mss Eur E 218/7, 6.

³³ Ibid., William Muir, 19 June 1876, 10-13

According to the rules of the Indian Civil Service, Lytton should have reported the dissents to the Home government. Instead he requested Norman, Hobhouse and Muir to withhold their dissents until he had completed an explanation of the affair. They agreed and thus the Secretary of State received no information until nearly a year later in May 1877.³⁴ By that time Sir John Strachey, Sir E. B. Johnson and Mr. W. Stokes, all supporters of Lytton, had replaced his three opponents on the Council.³⁵ At no time did the British government regard the three dissents as official. Muir later published his own in order to disassociate himself from Lytton's policies.³⁶

Shere Ali replied to Lytton's July communication after a two month delay. He again declined a British agent and volunteered to send his representative to a convenient location on the frontier.³⁷ The British Vakeel reported concurrently the arrival of several messengers from General Kaufmann at Kabul. Atta Mohammed himself appeared at the Viceroy's headquarters at Simla on 6 October. Shere Ali had sent him to tell the Viceroy of

³⁴Northbrook, Afghan Question, 41.

³⁵Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 17

³⁶Ibid., 174.

³⁷Amcer to Commissioner, 3 September 1876 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 553.

his specific complaints against the British Government.³⁸ He considered Northbrook's opposition to his treatment of Yakub Khan in 1874 an intrusion in his personal affairs and an encouragement to his adversaries. He also objected to the loss of parts of the Sistan which rightfully belonged to Afghanistan and presents given by Northbrook to the Khan of Wakhan as a reward for hospitality to a British commission passing through his territory. For some reason the former Viceroy had never informed the Amir of this as was customary.³⁹ Finally, Shere Ali complained of the resolute refusal of the British government to conclude a satisfactory treaty of defense or to recognize Abdulla Jan as his rightful successor.⁴⁰

The Vakeel supplemented Shere Ali's messages with the surprising information that the Amir had lost his alarm at Russia's progress in Central Asia. The Amir and General Kaufmann carried on a regular correspondence through Russian agents who had frequently visited Shere Ali since the British first advised him to answer the

³⁸ Ibid., Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877, 541.

³⁹ The Afghan Committee, Causes of the Afghan War, Being a Selection of the Papers Laid Before Parliament (London: Chatto and Windus, 1879) 53.

⁴⁰ Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 541.

Governor's letters.⁴¹ Atta Mohammed may have reported the truth, rumor or simply what he thought Lytton wished to hear. In any event, the Viceroy believed the Amir had turned solidly toward Russia and he blamed non-interventionist policies. He wrote Salisbury that the old policy had estranged the Amir from "...the Power which had unconditionally subsidized and openly protected him."⁴² The British had done neither of these things. They occasionally had given rulers of Afghanistan grants of money and munitions but had never agreed to fixed subsidies. More significantly, they had dismissed perfunctorily the Amir's alarm about Russian incursions in central Asia. The British had disappointed Shere Ali too often. He saw no reason to discuss further arrangements.

The British government alleged it wished to promote stability in Afghanistan. Shere Ali rejected the mission on the grounds it would undermine stability. Lytton's inability to understand the Amir's predicament conceivably resulted from his nearly total ignorance of Afghan politics. The Viceroy decided the Amir relied on the British to protect him in their own interest regardless of his loyalty.⁴³ He was wrong. If the Amir

⁴¹Ibid., 542.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Memorandum of an Interview at Simla Between the Viceroy and the Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, 10 October 1876 in LC, Mss Eur E 218/11, 183.

outwardly turned against Britain, Lytton would "break him like a reed."⁴⁴ Therefore, the British must act to remove the ambivalence in its relationship with Afghanistan.

Escalating hostility in Europe between Russia and Turkey intensified Anglo-Russian animosity. Many people felt the events of the Russo-Turkish war would bring Russia and Great Britain into a military confrontation.⁴⁵ The Viceroy concluded Shere Ali either would accept the most advantageous alliance or remain nonaligned.⁴⁶ He quickly returned his native agent to Kabul armed with an aide memoire and an invitation for the Amir to go to Delhi to contract a formal alliance.⁴⁷ The aide memoire described the new policy towards Afghanistan which offered material assistance against unprovoked attack and the formal recognition of his chosen heir. In return the Amir would allow a British agent at Herat to oversee the frontier.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Ibid., Memorandum of an Interview at Simla Between the Viceroy and the Nawab Atta Mohammed Khan, 10 October 1876, 183.

⁴⁵ H. H. Dodwell, The Cambridge History of India, vol. VI: The Indian Empire 1858-1918, by H. H. Dodwell (Cambridge: Cambridge At the University Press) 416.

⁴⁶ Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 543.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Aide Memoire for Subsidiary Secret and Explanatory Agreement, 565; Burne, British Agents, 33-35.

Atta Mohammed arrived back in Kabul on November 1st. The Amir and his advisors pleaded illness as an excuse not to receive the Vakeel. Lytton suspected the alibi because he had heard Kaufmann's agent remained at Kabul and conferred with the Amir on military preparations for use against the British.⁴⁹ The Amir and his advisors sent a reply in December to the India government to explain their reservations. Syud Nur Mohammed reached Peshawar on 27 January 1877;⁵⁰ within two weeks of the British failure to stop armed conflict between Russia and Turkey.⁵¹

Anglo-Afghan relations had reached an impasse. Rectification of this sensitive state depended upon the outcome of the Peshawar meetings. Both sides unfortunately sent representatives certain to clash. Syud Nur Mohammed still smarted from his inability to secure a defensive treaty from the British in 1873⁵² and he strongly resented British insinuations he had encouraged reception of British agents in his country.⁵³ Sir Lewis

⁴⁹ Ibid., Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877, p. 543; Lytton to Salisbury, 13 November 1876 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 167-68.

⁵⁰ Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 543.

⁵¹ Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 180.

⁵² W. K. Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1950) 140.

⁵³ Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 124.

Pelly, the British negotiator, had gained an unfavorable reputation during his years in the India government. Local rulers greatly feared his involvement in their affairs.⁵⁴

The Conference at Peshawar opened with the reading of the Amir's statement of objections by Syud Nur Mohammed.⁵⁵ The Afghan Envoy required several weeks to deliver the declaration because of his extreme ill-health. During this time Lytton received reports of military escalation on Afghanistan's borders and rumors that Shere Ali had called for a jihad (holy war) against both Russia and England as enemies of Islam.⁵⁶ A pan-Islamic movement to eradicate western influences in the Middle East and Central Asia may have excited these rumors.⁵⁷ Syud Nur Mohammed thought the reports exaggerated the Amir's activities but did admit that in his absence, anti-British elements could have influenced Shere Ali.⁵⁸

The Afghan Agent queried H. W. Bellow, Secretary for the Conference, about Lytton's insistence on having British officials in Afghanistan. This requirement raised

⁵⁴Argyl, The Eastern Question, 409.

⁵⁵Government of India to Salisbury, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 543-44.

⁵⁶Ibid., 544.

⁵⁷Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 18-19.

⁵⁸Government of India to Salisbury, in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 544.

many doubts in the Amir's mind about British intentions. In fact, the Viceroy's obstinacy had convinced Shere Ali that if he conceded on the question of agents, he ultimately would lose his independence. Syud Nur Mohammed declared his ruler would die rather than relinquish his independence.⁵⁹ He told Pelly the presence of any European official in his country made the Afghans fear for their autonomy thus the Amir genuinely could not protect British agents.⁶⁰ Pelly argued the British could correct these misunderstandings only by maintaining a British representative there. The Viceroy, aware of past misrepresentations of British designs, wished to commit his Government to a protective alliance with the Afghan Government. But it could be effective only if Shere Ali permitted agents on his borders to monitor movement. Pelly threatened that the Amir's refusal would force the British to fortify their own borders.⁶¹

The illness of the Afghan Envoy often kept him from meetings and forced him to conduct business by written communiqué. In one such memo to Pelly he gave his assurance the Amir did not contemplate a jehad.⁶² The

⁵⁹ Ibid., H. W. Bellow, 28 January 1877, 568-69.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Meeting Between Sir Lewis Pelly and Syud Noor Mahomed Khan, 12 February 1877, 581-82.

⁶¹ Ibid., Meeting Between Pelly and Syud Noor Mahomed, 15 February 1877, 583-84.

⁶² Translation of a Letter from the Cabul Envoy to Pelly, 3 March 1877 in SP, LVI, C.2191, 652.

Viceroy, through Pelly, responded to the Kabul Envoy's statements in a manner which made further discussion pointless. He claimed he could not accept Shere Ali's explanations on the question of British agents. He did not expect the Amir to accept a representative at Kabul and had told him this. He offered a defensive treaty which absolutely demanded British observation of the frontiers. This matter had been an essential prerequisite for the Conference and Shere Ali had complied with it already when he sent his Envoy.⁶³ Therefore, Syud Nur Mohammed's lack of authority to accept this contingency amazed the Viceroy and rendered the Conference meaningless. The Treaty of 1877 did not serve as an excuse because the British never intended it to exist in perpetuity but only as a temporary assist to the Afghan government at a difficult time. The Treaty of 1855, on the other hand, constituted a permanent agreement for friendship. It did not commit the British to any fixed subsidy nor did it bind them to any restrictions. Lytton accused the Amir of frequent violations of this latter Treaty by not allowing British citizens to travel freely in Afghanistan and by calling for a jehad against the British in the frontier areas allied to them. Neither the agreement reached at Amballa in 1869 nor the one at Simla in 1873

⁶³Lytton to Salisbury, 18 December 1876 in LC, "Miscellaneous Letters," Mss Eur E 218/521/5, I, 705.

had the weight of a treaty thus did not abrogate that of 1855.⁶⁴ The Viceroy had every right to make demands aimed solely at preserving and strengthening the bonds of alliance between Afghanistan and Britain. The following day the Afghan Agent's Secretary informed Pelly the Envoy's condition prevented him from answering Lytton's statement. Pelly responded that it required only a yes or no -- would he agree to the proposal to station British officers on Afghanistan's borders. Until he agreed they could make no further arrangements.⁶⁵

Syud Nur Mohammed died in the early hours of 26 March.⁶⁶ Lytton instructed Pelly to terminate the Conference at once because Mir Akhor, Syud Nur Mohammed's Secretary, had no powers. He also advised his representative to leave Peshawar as soon as possible to avert further complications. In the event another Afghan envoy arrived before he left he should explain he no longer possessed any jurisdiction.⁶⁷ Meanwhile Shere Ali sent Mir Akhor instructions to delay the British until his new envoy arrived with the authority to accept British conditions if absolutely necessary. Pelly left Peshawar

⁶⁴Pelly to Syud Nur Mohammed, 15 March 1877 in CP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), C. 2191, 588-91.

⁶⁵Ibid., Memorandum, 16 March 1877, 594-95.

⁶⁶Ibid., Pelly to Viceroy, 26 March 1877, 595.

⁶⁷Ibid., Viceroy to Pelly, 30 March 1877, 596.

before the new Afghan Envoy arrived. The Viceroy next severed all diplomatic relations with Kabul by refusing to permit his Vakeel to return there. Such a move is ordinarily a preliminary to war thus it greatly increased Shere Ali's apprehension.⁶⁸ Perhaps more significantly, it also kept important, accurate information from the India Government.⁶⁹

As the Conference closed, the Viceroy learned of an alert given by the Amir to the people of Kandahar province against the possibility of an attack by the British⁷⁰ and of a request for aid from General Kaufmann.⁷¹ Reports of a Russian advance towards Merv (fig. 3) made the rumor more odious. The Russian government claimed it intended only a limited punitive war against the Akhal Turcomans who constantly raided their merchant caravans. Many British officials believed, however, Russian exploits would end in the annexation of the whole region. The acquisition of Merv would bring Russian territory to the borders of Afghanistan, leaving Shere

⁶⁸Duff, The Afghan Policies of the British Government, 22.

⁶⁹Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 23.

⁷⁰Thomson to Derby, 16 April 1877 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 223.

⁷¹Government of India to Salisbury, 10 May 1877 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 544-45.

Ali's domains the only buffer between Russia and Britain.⁷²

New foreign policies resulting from changes of government in London were not unusual in the British political system. Rather, the effect of personalities within the government created the impasse with the Amir. Salisbury's insistence that Northbrook carry out orders stringently opposed by the Government in India, Northbrook's decision to resign rather than modify Salisbury's directions and Lytton's support of policies he only minimally understood combined to produce a situation the British no longer controlled. Lytton's virtual dismissal of dissents filed by members of his council dramatically points out the significance of decisions made by the "man-on-the-spot" Enmity between Britain and Russia over Turkey, which magnified problems with Afghanistan, was only one of many random, unpredictable events which moved the British further from their non-interference policy toward Afghanistan.

⁷²Loftus to de Giers, 9 June 1877 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 569; Derby to Loftus, 13 June, 1877, 565-66; Thomas to Derby, 16 June 1877, 569; Meshed Agent to Thomas, 16 June 1877, 571; Thomas to Derby, 20 June 1877, 570-71; de Giers to Schouvaloff, 18 July 1877, 577.

CHAPTER V

THE RUSSIAN MISSION

Thou set thy foot where England used to stand!
Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!
Slave of the slaves that call thee Lord
and Weak as their foul tongues who praise thee.
"The White Czar" Swinburne

Russia advanced toward Afghanistan diplomatically as well as physically. British frontier agents learned in August 1875 of Shere Ali's refusal to allow a group of Russian officers accompanied by a Moslem Emissary into Afghanistan.¹ Several days later the Moslem Envoy entered Afghan territory without the Amir's permission. Shere Ali reportedly notified his border officials to permit the man to proceed to Kabul if he already had reached Balkh.² The Amir provided housing for the Russian Envoy when he reached Kabul in September but declined to receive him. Shere Ali delivered over to the British Vekeel the declaration from General Kaufmann brought by the Muslem

¹Pollock to Aitcheson, 30 August 1875 in Great Britain, Foreign Office, Confidential Prints 539, 3870, "Correspondence Respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia," 92.

²Pollock to Aitcheson, 1 September 1875 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), "Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," 517; Pollock to Aitcheson, 6 September 1875, 517.

Agent. It contained Kaufmann's acknowledgement of two letters from the Amir, the congratulations on the nomination of Abdullah Jan and a statement of pleasure on the friendly relations between Afghanistan and Great Britain.³ British officials perceived a new tone in Kaufmann's message and concluded, "God knows what state secrets are concealed in it!"⁴

The Amir's border guards turned back from the Amu Darya a second Moslem Agent from Tashkend in February 1876.⁵ A third Russian messenger successfully reached Kabul some time in August.⁶ He presented Shere Ali with a second proclamation from Kaufmann which emphasized the friendship between Russia and Afghanistan⁷ and explained Russian motives for the annexation of Khokand.⁸ The Amir returned a vague but cordial response which alluded to

³ Ibid., Pollock to Aitcheson, 13 September 1875, 517.

⁴ Ibid., Pollock to Aitcheson, 15 September 1875, 518.

⁵ Ibid., Pollock to Thornton, 25 February 1876, 526.

⁶ Ibid., Pollock to Thornton, 6 June 1876, 529-30; Thomson to Derby, 9 August 1876 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 140; Meshed Agent, 7 June 1876, 140-41.

⁷ Cabul Diary, 22-24 August 1876 in SP, LXXX Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 539.

⁸ Ibid., Governor General in Council to Salisbury, 18 September 1876, 537.

problems with the British caused by Kaufmann's correspondence.⁹

The Viceroy entreated the Home government to tender a formal complaint about the increased activity of General Kaufmann. To Salisbury he confided he formerly had not felt it necessary to complain of the correspondence between the Governor of Tashkend and the Amir of Kabul. The reception of Russian emissaries at Kabul, however, made intervention imperative.¹⁰ Lytton contended Shere Ali discussed matters of political significance in his communications with Kaufmann and held clandestine meetings with the Governor's emissaries. These activities defied both the Anglo-Afghan agreement and the guarantees of Prince Gortchakov given in 1869. The Viceroy feared Russia would supplant Britain at Kabul if the situation went unchallenged.¹¹ Salisbury agreed.¹² Lord Loftus, British Ambassador to St. Petersburg, accordingly reminded the Russian government of its pledge to regard Afghanistan as "completely outside the sphere within which Russia may

⁹Ibid., MacNabb to Thornton, 19 September 1876, 541-42.

¹⁰Ibid., Viceroy to Salisbury, 16 September 1876, 533-34.

¹¹Ibid., Governor General in Council to Salisbury, 18 September 1876, 537.

¹²Ibid., L. Mallet to Tenterden, 22 September 1876, 533.

be called upon to exercise her influence."¹³

Count Schouvalov, Russian Representative in London, disclaimed all knowledge of Kaufmann's interference in Afghan affairs.¹⁴ When questioned, Kaufmann had told Prince de Giers, head of Russia's Asiatic Department, his correspondence to Shere Ali contained only expressions of friendship. He also denied he had sent agents to Kabul and insisted the Amir of Bokhara or Khan of Balkh transmitted all his letters to the Amir for him.¹⁵ Gortchakov relayed the denial to Loftus on November 15.¹⁶ De Giers admitted two days later, however, that an emissary from Kaufmann had delivered a message directly to the Amir. Loftus demanded that Kaufmann discontinue his exclusive communications with Shere Ali. De Giers claimed the Governor of Tashkend feared an expedition against the Merv Turcomans¹⁷ allegedly contemplated by Shere Ali in violation of Britain's agreement to restrain him from any

¹³Ibid., Derby to Loftus, 2 October 1876, 534; Loftus to de Giers, 30 September 1876 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 534.

¹⁴Derby to Loftus, 24 October 1876 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 540.

¹⁵Ibid., Kaufmann to de Giers, 9 November 1876, 549-50.

¹⁶Ibid., Loftus to Derby, 15 November 1876, 543.

¹⁷Ibid., Loftus to Derby, 16 November 1876, 543-44.

interference north of the Amu Darya.¹⁸ No conclusive evidence exists to substantiate the accusation but even the possibility provided the Russian government with an explanation for Kaufmann's behavior. Salisbury chose not to accept the excuse because he firmly believed Kaufmann had overstepped the bounds of the Anglo-Russian agreement. He insisted the correspondence with Shere Ali stop.¹⁹

The dispute over the Kaufmann correspondence occurred shortly before the Peshawar Conference. From the close of the Conference and removal of the British Vakeel from Kabul, no official intercourse transpired between the Viceroy and the Amir,²⁰ although frequent rumors of a jehad against the British reached India.²¹ The India government gave permission to a Turkish Mission to travel to Kabul in September to petition Shere Ali for aid in their war against Russia. The Turks requested he do no more than continue his alliance with Britain. The Amir evaded the question, complaining instead of British intrusions in his affairs. He cited British interference in Quetta and other parts of the frontier as evidence.

¹⁸ Ibid., Loftus to Derby, 6 December 1876, 547.

¹⁹ Ibid., Loftus to Derby, 16 November 1876, 543-44.

²⁰ Northbrook, Afghan Question, 43.

²¹ Murza Abbass Khan to Tylour Thomson, 8 July 1877 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 256-57.

Russia, he added, had not trespassed in his territory. Moreover, the British Government grievously insulted him with their incessant demands to send European agents after he had told them he could not protect them. He presciently concluded, "God forbid, if any of their agents were assassinated, they would at once come down upon me and charge me with being the instigator."²²

The outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war in April 1877 exacerbated the tenuous situation in Central Asia. While chaotic negotiations went on in Europe, equally confused discussions took place in the India government. The emergence of Shere Ali's nephew Abdur Rahman added to Britain's existing problems. The Governor of Samarcand's son, who had accompanied the Russian Envoy, informed the Amir of Russia's refusal to help Abdur Rahman take Afghanistan from him. In the event of a war with Great Britain, however, Abdur Rahman had promised to defeat the Amir and allow the Russians' passage to India. The Russian Agent cautioned Shere Ali of the importance of an immediate alliance between Russia and Afghanistan to protect him from his nephew's threats.²³ Shere Ali knew quite well Abdur Rahman could not defeat him without Russian support. The warning nicely served the Russian cause.

²²Philips, Evolution of India and Pakistan, 451-52.

²³Confidential Newsletters From Government Agent at Peshawar, 13 May 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 590-91.

British officials at Peshawar sent the first reports of a European Russian agent on his way to Kabul in early June 1878.²⁴ The impending arrival of a European agent from Russia profoundly disturbed the Amir. He notified Kaufmann, via the Governor of Samarcand, he could not receive a European agent for the same reason he had refused the British -- he could not protect him.²⁵ He then assembled his Chiefs to discuss the matter of the Russian agent and the implied threat of Abdur Rahman. Unofficial information acquired by Major Cavagnari at Peshawar indicated a reevaluation by the Afghan Government of their relations with the British. The Amir told his advisors he considered Russia's recent behavior extremely unwise. Several members of his Council, greatly alarmed by Russia's conduct, recommended they reassert their willingness to cooperate with Britain.²⁶

In mid-June a reliable Afghan source informed the Indian government of a series of proposals presented to the Amir by the Russian Envoy still at Kabul. The Russians requested the reception of Russian officials with

²⁴ Ibid., Unofficial Communication from Peshawar, 5 June 1878, 591.

²⁵ Ibid., Extract From Peshawar Diary by Cavagnari, 5 June 1878, 592; Unofficial Communication From Peshawar, 5 June 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 96-97.

²⁶ Extract of Peshawar Diary by Cavagnari, 16 June 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 593; Extract From Confidential Newsletter From Jelalabad, 16 June 1878, 614.

the status of consuls at several locations in Afghanistan; consent to position troops on Afghanistan's borders; authorization to build a road from Samarcand to Kabul, Herat and Kandahar; passage to India; construction of a telegraph line between troop locations; and sale of provisions by the Afghans at a fair price. In compensation, the Russian government offered to recognize the Amir's family as his rightful heirs "in perpetuity," remain outside of his internal affairs, grant material support for both the internal and external harmony of Afghanistan and receive Afghan envoys in Russia.²⁷ The Russian government proposed precisely what Shere Ali most wanted -- recognition of Abdulla Jan and aid against all enemies. De Giers denied that any such conspiracy had occurred although he did admit that Russian military authorities may have prepared a plan for protecting their southern borders in view of the possibility of war with Britain.²⁸

The Viceroy telegraphed Secretary of State Cranbrook on 30 July that an Indian Medical Officer loaned to Shere Ali had overheard the Amir tell of the arrival of General Kaufmann and a military escort at the Amu Darya.²⁹ The Amir's officials had stopped the Mission

²⁷ Extract From Peshawar Newsletter, 18 June 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 132.

²⁸ Loftus to Salisbury in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 586.

²⁹ Salisbury had been appointed Foreign Secretary.

but allowed them to proceed after receiving orders from Shere Ali. Lytton did not believe the Envoy to be Kaufmann and speculated he must be a high-ranking native officer. He requested permission for the Indian government to handle the matter. He intended to demand that the Amir accept a British mission if Cranbrook agreed.³⁰ Cranbrook gave his permission but cautioned Lytton to make certain of the presence of a Russian mission at Kabul before insisting the Amir receive a British one. He also requested the Viceroy to keep him informed.³¹ Lytton telegraphed three days later that a Russian Mission definitely had arrived at Kabul. He felt he could settle the matter quickly and with only slight disturbance if left alone. He even speculated that a British Mission would release Shere Ali from pressure. With Cranbrook's authorization he would instruct his agent to conclude a new agreement with the Amir based on Salisbury's original instructions.³²

³⁰Viceroy to Cranbrook, 30 July 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 597; Lytton to Cranbrook, 30 July 1878, in Indian Office Library, Lytton Collection, "Correspondence Respecting the Relations Between the British Government and that of Afghanistan Since the Accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan," C.2190, Mss Eur E 218/11, 227.

³¹Cranbrook to Lytton, 1 August 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), "Correspondence Respecting the Relationship Between the British Government and That of Afghanistan Since the Accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan," 602.

³²Ibid., Lytton to Cranbrook, 2 August 1878, 598.

Lytton decided that Britain must take prompt measures to keep Afghanistan from Russia. He evaluated the frontier situation in a Minute in which he labeled the present conditions "dangerously defective." Russia's equally inadequate southern frontier made security precautions absolutely necessary. The status of Afghanistan had reached a crucial point. Lytton claimed non-interventionists based their policies on the mistaken notion Russia would use force to enter Afghanistan and thus push the Amir to the British for help. The Viceroy believed Russia would use more insidious methods to control Afghanistan. Consequently, Britain either must reassert their primacy at Kabul or, failing that, make another agreement with Russia to guarantee their respective frontiers. He personally favored the former option because it required less time and fewer entanglements. The Home government had given him permission to attempt a mission to Kabul. Negotiations with another European Power would be out of his jurisdiction and subject to Parliamentary debate situation Lytton found very unappealing. He advised Cranbrook he did not anticipate serious opposition from Shere Ali and drew up instructions for his envoy to offer the Amir a new arrangement based on certain conditions. The Amir must bar all Russian officials from Afghanistan and have no communication with them without British permission. He must receive British missions when necessary and allow the stationing of British officials at Herat

and Balkh, or a permanent agent at Kabul. In return, the British would grant him a fixed yearly allowance, acknowledge his chosen successor and "guarantee against annexation." The Viceroy resolved he would make war on Afghanistan only as a last resort.³³ The idea of war, however, had become a distinct possibility.

Lytton received varied reports on the Russia Mission during the first week of August. Cavagnari reported from Peshawar that the Russian Envoy had threatened to bring Abdur Rahman to Kabul if the Amir refused the Russian proposals.³⁴ Now that conclusive evidence existed about the Russian mission at Kabul, Salisbury gave his permission to send the British. He instructed Lytton to inform him before taking any action in the event Shere Ali refused the Mission.³⁵

The Russian group appeared to have left Tashkend at the same time negotiations opened between Turkey and Russia at Berlin.³⁶ Cranbrook called Salisbury's

³³ Ibid., Minute by Lytton, 150-67.

³⁴ Newsletter From Government Agent at Peshawar, 4 August 1878 in SP, LXXVII, Central Asia No. 2 (1878), "Further Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," C. 2188, 66.

³⁵ L. Mallet to Tenterden, 8 August 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 596-97; Secretary of State to Viceroy, 3 August 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 603.

³⁶ Khan, A Chapter in the Great Game, 214; Roberts, Forty-one Years In India, II, 110.

attention to several articles in Russian newspapers he believed represented accurate accounts of Russian affairs. They also reflected the uneasy situation between Russia and Britain over Turkey. An article in the Golos of 1 August announced that three columns of troops, each with a separate mission had left Russia. One column proposed to subdue the tribes along the upper Amu Darya, the second to take Merv and its surrounding area, and the third to subjugate the tribesmen between the Amu Darya and the Hindu Kush; well into Afghan territory. This last group would move on into India with Shere Ali's cooperation.³⁷ A second article denied that Shere Ali had refused entry to a Russian Mission led by General Stolietov. It claimed the delay at the Amy Darya occurred because an escort from the Amir had not arrived on time. The story in Novoe Vremia also described the unusually cordial reception accorded Stolietov at Kabul a 115 gun salute rather than the 51 guns given for an India Viceroy.³⁸ Cranbrook could not have been positive about the authenticity of Russian newspaper accounts. They did lend support, however, to the Government's decision to give Lytton his way.

The threat of an Anglo-Russian war abated with

³⁷Extract From the "Golos," 1 August 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 602.

³⁸Translation of Extract of "Novoe Vremia," in SP, LXXVII, Central Asia No. 2 (1878), 77-78.

the signing of the Treaty of Berlin on 13 July. Plunkett, the British charge d'affaires at St. Petersburg, questioned Prince de Giers again in mid-August about reported Russian troop movements. De Giers cautiously replied that military officials did not include him in their tactical decisions. He assured Plunkett the Russian government had ordered all troops to return. "Everything," he said, "has been stopped."³⁹ For the British, everything had not stopped and they remained dismally ignorant of the purpose and success of Stolietov at Kabul. His presence at Kabul seemed more ominous since the prospect of war had diminished.

Lytton dispatched the Nawab Gholam Hussein Khan with a letter to Shere Ali on 14 August. The letter explained that the Viceroy wished to send Sir Neville Chamberlain, Commander of the Madras Army, to discuss a new agreement toward reestablishing close relations. Lytton asked the Amir to instruct his provincial chiefs to receive the Mission and grant passage to Kabul in the manner customary for emissaries of an amiable nation.⁴⁰ The death of Abdulla Jan on 17 August interrupted the Viceroy's plans. Cavagnari advised that Chamberlain remain at Peshawar until Lytton received instructions from

³⁹Plunkett to Salisbury, 14 August 1878 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), 601.

⁴⁰Viceroy to Shere Ali Khan, 14 August 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 606.

Kabul.⁴¹ He wrote again the next day explaining Afghan mourning customs. The Amir and his Court would conduct no business for approximately three days. At the end of this intense bereavement, the Amir's Court would observe a period of more moderate mourning lasting forty days in which traditionally they handled business as usual. Cavagnari suggested, however, Shere Ali might use the death of his son to defer the attentions of both Russia and Britain. He advised Lytton to delay any action until the Nawab could wait upon the Amir.⁴² The Viceroy followed the advice and kept Chamberlain at Peshawar.⁴³

Cavagnari learned of the departure of the Russian Envoy from Kabul at the end of August. News from Kabul indicated the Amir appeared willing to accept a British Mission.⁴⁴ The Viceroy used the pause caused by Abdulla Jan's death to prepare a new Minute on frontier policy. He warned against the dangers of Russian entrenchment at Kabul. From Kabul, he argued, Russia easily might extend her influence over India's frontier tribes thus greatly increasing her reputation - "a factor of almost magic

⁴¹Ibid., Cavagnari to Viceroy, 21 August 1878, 607.

⁴²Cavagnari to Viceroy, 22 August 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 164.

⁴³Viceroy to Cranbrook, 25 August 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 607.

⁴⁴Ibid., Cavagnari to Viceroy, 31 August 1878, 655.

power in Eastern warfare."⁴⁵ Lytton proposed the Government rectify its Northwest Frontier by securing a line stretching along the mountains of the Hindu Kush from the Pamirs to Herat, back across to the Helmand, south along the river to Kandahar and out to the Arabian Sea⁴⁶ (fig.

11

Clearly Lytton entertained few doubts about the best way to proceed. He instructed Chamberlain to leave for Kabul about 16 September; the Nawab by then having told the Amir of the benevolent purpose of the Mission but also having warned Shere Ali that "a refusal of free passage and safe conduct will be considered [an] act of open hostility."⁴⁷ He authorized Chamberlain to demand the departure of all Russian Agents and assure the Amir of defense against any Russian threat.⁴⁸

Cranbrook asked Lytton on 13 September to suspend the Mission until St. Petersburg responded to a protest sent by the British Government.⁴⁹ In the interval the Afghan affair assumed great significance in England due

⁴⁵Lytton's Minute on Frontier Policy, 4 September 1878 in Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 452.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Telegram From Viceroy, 8 Septmeber 1878 in SP LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 608.

⁴⁸Viceroy to Cranbrook, 8 September 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 136-37.

⁴⁹Ibid., Cranbrook to Viceroy, 13 September 1878, 139.

to The Times' Calcutta correspondent. Three articles in one week claimed the British Government, specifically the Foreign and India Offices, had constructed a definite policy to eliminate all future problems on the Northwest Frontier. The Correspondent gave particular credit to the Viceroy who was, he believed,

. . . gifted with broad statesmanlike views, the result partly of the application of great natural intellectual capacity to the close cultivation of political science and the highest order of statecraft.⁵⁰

The second news story contended that the British must do whatever necessary to stop Russian influence at Kabul even if it meant war.⁵¹ In the third feature, the Calcutta Correspondent approved the proposed British Mission as "a momentous departure" from the old policies and a necessary prologue to a peaceful settlement of frontier problems.⁵² The Home government at this point also viewed Lytton's insistence on a mission as part of a well-planned policy to thwart Russian designs on Afghanistan. Disraeli confided to Cranbrook that the Viceroy's management of the problem with the Amir had raised his already high estimation of him.⁵³ He therefore authorized the Secretary to use his own judgement in advising Lytton. He

⁵⁰The Times (London), September 9, 1878.

⁵¹Ibid., September 10, 1878.

⁵²Ibid., September 16, 1878.

⁵³Buckle, Disraeli, 381.

personally did not feel the Mission need wait any longer to depart for Kabul.⁵⁴

Shere Ali received the Nawab on 12 September. The Amir told him he indeed had given the Russian Mission permission to come to Kabul but he did not intend to grant the same privilege to the British.⁵⁵ He would consider the British Mission when he had mourned his son's death. The Amir ordered the Nawab to read him a letter in which Chamberlain advised the Agent to "act firmly" if the Amir attempted to hinder the arrival of their Mission. Shere Ali threatened to break off all relations with the British if they forced the Mission on him.⁵⁶ He offered instead to send a representative to Peshawar to consult with Chamberlain.⁵⁷ Chamberlain already had requested a safe conduct from Faiz Mohammed, Commander of the Fort at Ali Masjid. He had cautioned the Commander that failure to grant passage would not stop his Mission.⁵⁸ Lytton authorized him to leave Peshawar without waiting for the Amir's emissary and to make separate

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Telegram to Viceroy, 17 September 1878 in SP. LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 610.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, 1 December 1878, 661.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Chamberlain to Viceroy, 17 September 1878, 615.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Chamberlain to Faiz Mohammed, 15 September 1878, 614.

agreements with the Khyberri tribes if Faiz Mohammed refused the Mission.⁵⁹

Cavagnari, accompanied by a small escort, left Peshawar for Ali Masjid on 21 September. When they arrived they met with an absolute refusal from Faiz Mohammed to proceed further.⁶⁰ Chamberlain telegraphed the Viceroy at once for instructions. Lytton told him to recall Cavagnari, inform Faiz Mohammed the British government considered his refusal as that of the Amir and make private arrangements for passage to Kabul with the tribes.⁶¹

The British government found itself faced with an onerous choice -- complete withdrawal from Afghan affairs or a provocative measure which might result in war. Disraeli, hoping to avoid Cabinet involvement, instructed Cranbrook to decide on a suitable course of action with the Viceroy. The Prime Minister would support their decision.⁶² Lytton assured Cranbrook that as long as the Russians did not intervene, he could solve the problem "without extensive military operations or heavy

⁵⁹ Ibid., Viceroy to Chamberlain, 17 September 1878, 615.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Telegram from Commissioner of Peshawar, 21 September 1878, 619.

⁶¹ Ibid., Viceroy to Chamberlain, 22 September 1878, 610.

⁶² Buckle, Disraeli, 381-82.

expenditure."⁶³ He requested the Government suggest to the Russians that their intrusion might provoke similar interference by the British in Russian possessions.⁶⁴

Faiz Mohammed's conduct had made further overtures useless in Lytton's judgement. Assistance from the independent tribes seemed the only means to reach Kabul.⁶⁵ These tribes, although autonomous, nominally recognized Shere Ali as their ruler. The attempt to obtain their assistance affirmed the Amir's conviction that the British threatened his independence. Cavagnari predicted that treating with the tribes independently would frustrate any possible negotiations with the Amir⁶⁶ but this time the Viceroy ignored the Commissioner's advice.

Both Lytton's own Party and the Opposition ultimately criticized his insistence on the British Mission. The Viceroy angered Disraeli initially by sending the Mission, against orders, before the Government received Russia's response to their complaint. The Prime Minister's irritation increased when he learned the Mission had disobeyed his instructions to go via Kandahar and the Bolan pass and instead chose the Khyber with its

⁶³Viceroy to Cranbrook, 26 September 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3870, 168.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Government of India to Cranbrook, 26 September 1878 in LC, Mss Eur E 218/11.

⁶⁶Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 216.

much higher potential for resistance (fig. 2). The "man-on-the-spot" had taken his own initiative and "received a snub, which it may cost us much to wipe away."⁶⁷ Lytton's impulsiveness forced Disraeli to convene the Cabinet in an effort to silence the many rumors which proliferated in England. The Viceroy's methods, he stated, would have been suitable had Russia been the aggressor. As it stood, Lytton faced this stalemate with the Amir of Afghanistan because he had disregarded orders.⁶⁸

Lytton received a letter from the Amir during the second week in October protesting the intimidating quality of the Viceroy's messages delivered by the Nawab.⁶⁹ Lytton forwarded the Amir's letter to the Home government. He pointed out, in his accompanying note, that the Amir neither had apologized for the insult at Ali Masjid nor made any allusions to improving his relations with the British. Moreover, viewed within the context of Eastern manners, Shere Ali's tone was deliberately impertinent. The Viceroy advised they lose no more time by demanding an apology. He and his Council had decided the British Government should issue a formal statement

⁶⁷ Disraeli to Cranbrook, 26 September 1878 in Buckle, Disraeli, 382.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Disraeli to Cranbrook, 3 October 1878, 383.

⁶⁹ Viceroy to Government, 19 October 1878 in SP LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 626-27.

expressing friendship for the people of Afghanistan and placing blame for the dispute solely on the Amir. The Indian army should move into the Kurram Valley and eject the Amir's guard from the Khyber pass.⁷⁰ Lytton's decisions had become increasingly provocative. He had concluded that a "war with Afghanistan [would be] a deplorable necessity."⁷¹ In England, Sir Henry Rawlinson corroborated rumors that the Viceroy had isolated himself from his opponents in India and had "taken to eat and drink more than is good for him."⁷²

Salisbury rejected Lytton's proposals, directed him to appeal to Shere Ali both for an apology and a safe conduct for the British Mission. He did endorse a troop movement on the frontier as a show of strength. The British government would regard the Amir as an antagonist and take the necessary action unless it received the apology and acceptance of the Mission.⁷³

The dispute with the Amir invoked severe criticism from Cabinet and Parliament members who felt that Russian reaction would frustrate negotiations on the

⁷⁰Ibid., Telegram From Viceroy, 19 October 1878, "Cabul Correspondence," 627.

⁷¹"Mission to Cabul," in LC, Mss Eur E 218/7, 20-31.

⁷²Granville to Gladstone, 20 October 1878 in Ramm, Political Correspondence, 83.

⁷³Secretary of State to Viceroy, 25 October 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), 628; 30 October 1878, 628-29.

implementation of the Berlin Treaty.⁷⁴ Disraeli argued that no other course lay open. They had dealt with the Amir as one would a spoiled child. He either had ignored their communications completely or replied discourteously.⁷⁵ Cranbrook added his support to Lytton's policies and the Cabinet yielded.⁷⁶ The Afghan Committee, formed by Lord Lawrence, attempted to dissuade the Prime Minister from war, requested the publication of all relevant papers and a debate in Parliament on the proposed ultimatum to Shere Ali. Disraeli refused all three appeals.⁷⁷

The Viceroy's methods, met by equal resistance from his "victim", had deepened the stalemate between Britain and Afghanistan. The presence of Abdur Rahman in Russia and the death of Abdullah Jan were chance occurrences which caused additional complications. More critical, however, was the structure of government which prompted officials to use measures specifically designed to avoid involvement of the British public of Parliament. This attitude permitted the "man-on-the-spot to achieve a situation which only armed conflict could solve.

⁷⁴ Brigadier General Sir Percy Sykes, A History of Afghanistan (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1940) 108.

⁷⁵ Beaconsfield Speech in Great Britain, Parliament, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, CCXLIII, 516.

⁷⁶ Sykes, History of Afghanistan, 108.

⁷⁷ Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 251.

CHAPTER VI

WAR - THE FIRST PHASE November 1878

Faiz Mohammed received the British ultimatum to the Amir on 3 November.¹ In the following days, Lytton, his Secretary A.C. Lyall and his military advisors made preparations for war and continued their efforts to divorce the frontier tribes from Shere Ali.² The approach of winter which would close the mountain passes into Afghanistan made them hope for a prompt decision from London. They greatly feared Shere Ali would "send an apology or the Home Government suddenly interfere."³

Though angered at Lytton's disregard of his instructions, Disraeli could do very little about the deadlock with Afghanistan the Viceroy had created. His only alternative to allowing Lytton to use his own means to solve the predicament was to recall him and admit he had made a grave error in appointing him as Viceroy.

¹Viceroy to Government, 4 November 1878 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), "Further Papers Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan," 634.

²Ibid.; Memorandum From A. C. Lyall to Government of India, 625.

³Hanna, The Second Afghan War, I, 243.

Moreover, a successful invasion of Afghanistan would allow rectification of the Northwest Frontier; a prospect attractive to the Prime Minister. In a speech at the Lord Mayor's dinner in early November, Disraeli used the term "scientific frontier" for the first time. The phrase derived from the French description of their artificial boundary with the Lowlands. They had created a "scientific" boundary where no physical divide such as mountains or rivers existed to separate the two countries.⁴ Disraeli regarded the present Northwest boundary of the Indian Empire as "haphazard" at best; requiring a large and expensive force to protect it. He believed the British should design a "scientific" frontier to remove future anxiety and enable them to enjoy friendly relations with their neighbors.⁵

The Amir had not responded by 20 November as the ultimatum demanded thus the British declared a state of war between Britain and Afghanistan at sunset of that day.⁶ British troops invaded the Amir's territory the next day, striking first at the Fort of Ali Masjid where the Mission had been turned back seven weeks earlier. The

⁴Duff, The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government, 30.

⁵Buckle, Disraeli, 390-91.

⁶Sydney H. Shadbolt, The Afghan Campaign of 1878-1880, Compiled From Official and Private Sources (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882) 6.

Amir's reply, which arrived a few days later,⁷ contained neither the apology nor the safe conduct required. The Amir announced the British had confirmed his earlier assumption that they would hold him accountable for the safety of a mission. He agreed, however, to receive a small delegation of twenty or thirty persons.⁸

The debate in Parliament on the war began on 9 December 1878. Stanhope, Undersecretary of State, supported the Viceroy with the contention that the Amir's reply to the Ultimatum had not arrived in India until 30 November ten days after the British deadline. The Amir's messenger, in fact, had reached Basawal (on the Kabul River about two thirds of the way from Jalalabad to Dakka) on 22 November. He supposedly had returned the Amir's letter to Kabul on hearing of the defeat of the Amir's troops at Ali Masjid. Shere Ali then wrote the reply which offered to receive a small mission.⁹

Salisbury answered Northbrook's call for a censure of Government by claiming the shift to a more aggressive policy had resulted from the lack of information left from Northbrook's Viceroyalty. He agreed that Russia probably

⁷Malleon, History of Afghanistan, 452.

⁸Amir of Kabul to Viceroy, 19 November 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), "Further Correspondence," C. 2401, 699-700.

⁹December 1878 in Great Britain, Parliament, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Commons), CCXLIII 308.

would not invade India but the diplomatic assaults on Britain Russia could execute from Kabul necessitated uncompromising action. The Secretary also denied the India government had assured the Amir's failure to comply with British conditions by withdrawing the Vakeel from his Court thereby suspending any personal negotiations which might have eased tensions.¹⁰

A dispute over the lack of communication between India and London arose during the debate in the House of Commons. Mr. Morgan Lloyd queried Stanhope about the amount of official information received from India between 28 February 1876 and 10 May 1877; from Salisbury's original instructions to Lytton to the termination of the Peshawar Conference. Stanhope replied that they had received no official communications other than the published general statements of the Government of India and a few insignificant entries from the Kabul Diaries. Consequently, he could supply neither the dates of the dissents filed by three members of the Viceroy's Council nor the removal of the Native Agent from Kabul.¹¹ The Undersecretary answered that the Viceroy had used his own discretion as the authority for his October 1876 statement that Shere Ali must reach an agreement with the British

¹⁰ Ibid., Salisbury Debate on Vote for Expenses, 10 December 1878, 501-07.

¹¹ Ibid., 10 December 1878, 525-28.

risk an Anglo-Russian alliance at his expense.¹²

It appeared to Parliament that Lord Lytton had refrained intentionally from apprising the Home government of events in Afghanistan. His failures to do so violated the accepted procedures of his office. Viceroys and colonial governors frequently kept London in ignorance about such delicate issues, however, rarely for such a long period especially in view of the dissent in his own Council. Lytton, with the support of Salisbury and Cranbrook, had decided he must take strong steps to preserve the safety of Indian Empire. Therefore he could not risk uninformed or factional interference by Parliament or Cabinet members.

While the British debated, the Amir sought support from Russia. He had informed the Emperor of the probability of war with Britain in early November.¹³ Reportedly, the Russian Government had advised him to be patient. The Amir told his advisors he feared England and Russia intended to divide Afghanistan between them.¹⁴ A representative of the Russian government

¹²Ibid., 13 December 1878, 737-38.

¹³Shere Ali to Emperor, 9 October 1878 in SP, XCVIII, Central Asia No. 1 (1881), "Correspondence Respecting Affairs in Central Asia," C. 2798, 353-54; Shere Ali to Kaufmann, October 1878, 353.

¹⁴Extract From Newsletter, Dera Ismail Khan, 10 November 1878 in SP, LXXVIII, Central Asia No. 1 (1880), "Further Correspondence Respecting Affairs in Central Asia, 1879," 88-89.

confided to Sir Henry Elliot at Budapest on 16 November 1878 that his Government had overlooked the Amir's enmity toward the British while their own relations with Britain had been strained. The Russians attempted to reduce Shere Ali's hostility after the Peace of Berlin but had failed because the Amir believed he could defeat the British.¹⁵

A confused Shere Ali, one day wrathful toward Britain, the next toward Russia,¹⁶ left Kabul on 13 December. He freed his elder son Yakub from prison to take his place and set off to ask the Russian Emperor to call a conference of European nations to arbitrate his complaint against England.¹⁷

While the Amir pursued counsel from the Emperor, Count Schouvalov notified Salisbury his Government had recalled their delegation from Kabul. Salisbury, unaware the Mission remained at Kabul, reacted to this information with considerable surprise. The Russian Ambassador assured him he had advised prompt withdrawal but the War Minister and Prince de Giers had contradicted him hoping the Mission's presence in Kabul would permit leverage with

¹⁵Elliot to Salisbury, 16 November 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3871, "Further Correspondence Respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia," 347.

¹⁶Newsletter From Government Agent at Dera Ismail Khan, 22 November 1878 in SP, LXXVIII, Central Asia No. 1 (1880), 89.

¹⁷Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 92

England in negotiations over Turkey.¹⁸ A week later the Count inquired if the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1873 remained in effect. The Emperor hoped to maintain the former understanding with respect to Central Asia and promised to recall those of the Mission left at Kabul.¹⁹ Salisbury agreed the removal of the Mission would restore accord between Russia and Britain.²⁰

Cavagnari verified on 20 December the Amir's departure for Russia along with the last members of the Russian delegation. He reported also that many of the Amir's troops had abandoned him.²¹ Salisbury learned that the Emperor has issued an order to bar Shere Ali admission to Russia²² and that Kaufmann had sent the Amir a message advising him to make peace with Britain.²³ Kaufmann again communicated with Shere Ali four days later requesting

¹⁸Salisbury to Loftus, 11 December 1878 in Confidential Prints 539, 3871, 370.

¹⁹Schouvaloff to Salisbury, 19 December 1878 in SP, LXXVII, Central Asia No. 1 (1879), "Further Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," C. 2209, 104.

²⁰Ibid., Salisbury to Schouvaloff, 19 December 1878, 104-05.

²¹Cavagnari to Viceroy, 20 December 1878 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 701.

²²Salisbury to Loftus, 6 January 1879 in Confidential Prints 539, 4100, "Further Correspondence Respecting Affairs in Central Asia," 16.

²³Kaufmann to Shere Ali, 7 January 1879 in SP, XCVII, Central Asia No. 1 (1881), C. 2798, 359.

him to come to Tashkend.²⁴ The invitation to enter Russian territory restored Shere Ali's hopes. He entreated his officials at Herat to prepare a strong defense against the British in expectation of relief from Russia in the spring.²⁵

British troops scored several quick victories in Afghanistan. General Sam Browne entered Jalalabad on 20 December, General Donald Stewart's troops seized Kandahar with little opposition on 9 January 1879. General Robert's force reached Shutargardan, about thirty miles southeast of Kabul, a few days before Christmas (fig. 1).²⁶ Yakub Khan sent an urgent plea for advice to Cavagnari when apprised of British military successes. He promised to urge his father to abandon his struggle against the British.²⁷ Before Yakub could negotiate, Shere Ali died near Balkh on 21 February from a long

²⁴Ibid., Kaufmann to Shere Ali, 11 January 1879, 359.

²⁵Translation of a Firman by Amir Shere Ali Khan, 22 December 1878 in SP, LVII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 702; Thomson to Salisbury, LXXVII, Central Asia No. 1, 109.

²⁶William Hunt and Reginald L. Poole, The Political History of England, vol. XII: The History of England During the Reign of Victoria (1837-1901), by Sidney Low and Lloyd C. Sanders (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1907; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, Kraus Reprint Company, 1969) 308.

²⁷Yakub Khan to Cavagnari, 20 February 1879 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 705.

standing illness exacerbated by the travel through northern Afghanistan in the winter.²⁸ Those near reported that the Amir had lamented his refusal to listen when the British had told him not to expect support from Russia. Next to the British, he said, "the Russians are mere school-boys."²⁹

In early March Cavagnari forwarded conditions for formal negotiations to Yakub Khan. The British required him to relinquish the Khyber and Michni passes, their surrounding territory and Kurram, Sibi and Pishin; to submit his foreign affairs to them for approval; and to receive British agents at Kabul.³⁰ Yakub consented to the stipulations regarding foreign relations and British officials in Kabul. He objected, however, to the cession of any territory.³¹ The British government claimed it necessary to annex the areas specified because of the protective alliances made with the tribes there.³² Lord

²⁸Ibid., Cavagnari to Viceroy, 28 February 1879, 705.

²⁹Joshua Duke, Recollections of the Kabul Campaign 1879 and 1880 (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1883) 57-58.

³⁰Viceroy to Cavagnari, 6 March 1879 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 706-07.

³¹Ibid., Mohamed Yakoob Khan to Cavagnari, March 1879, 707-08.

³²G. R. Elsmie, Field-Marshal Sir Donald Stewart, G.C.B. G.C.S.I., C.I.E.: An Account of His Life, Mainly in His Own Words (London: John Murrey, 1903) 261-62.

Northbrook contended, however, that Disraeli simply refused to forfeit the opportunity to strengthen the frontier; a fact demonstrated by the route into Afghanistan taken by the British army.³³

The Amir Yakub Khan arrived at Gandamak (fig. 1) to begin negotiations with the British on 8 May 1879.³⁴ The Viceroy's military success had restored Disraeli's confidence in him. He wrote to a friend that he wished "Lytton and General Roberts were at the Cape of Good Hope."³⁵ The importance placed by the Government on the Zulu War in the south of Africa, by contrast, dimmed their interest in the war in Afghanistan.³⁶ This diminished attention permitted the India government more of a free hand in their negotiations with Yakub Khan. The Amir had gone to Gandamak over the warnings of his advisors that the British would interpret his presence as acceptance of their conditions. Yakub held out until 17 May. He agreed to the British terms after a private audience with Cavagnari.³⁷ The inducement was not made public. In any

³³Thomas George Baring Northbrook, "A Brief Account of Recent Transactions in Afghanistan" (Printed for private circulation, 1880) 11-12.

³⁴Viceroy to Secretary of State, 8 May 1879 in 'P, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 713.

³⁵Disraeli to Lady Chesterfield, 8 May 1879 in Zetland, The Letters of Disraeli, II, 283.

³⁶Elsmie, Sir Donald Stewart, 271.

³⁷Ali, The Mohammedzai Period, 97

event, Yakub Khan and Cavagnari reached a final agreement on 26 May which the India government approved on the 30th.³⁸

The Treaty of Gandamak made Afghanistan a British sphere of influence. By its terms the Amir Yakub Khan agreed to: 1) a permanent friendship with the British government, 2) amnesty to Afghans who had assisted the British during the conflict, 3) submission of all foreign affairs to the British government, 4) a British agent at Kabul and on the frontiers if necessary, 5) an Afghan representative to the India government, 6) the security of British officials in Afghanistan, 7) free access to British merchants and traders, and 8) construction of a telegraph line from Kurram to Kabul. In return, the British government pledged never to intrude in Yakub's internal affairs, to assist against external threat and to pay an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees³⁹ to Yakub and his successors. By the Treaty, the British would restore Jalalabad and Kandahar to Afghanistan. They would retain the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi but give revenue collected there to the Government of Afghanistan.⁴⁰

³⁸Government of India to Cranbrook, 2 June 1879 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 6, "Despatch of India Forwarding Treaty of Peace," C. 2362, 689.

³⁹Approximately 60,000 pounds sterling.

⁴⁰Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 196-97; Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, 240-42.

Yakub Khan returned to Kabul, announced the cessation of all dissension between the Afghan and British governments and declared a general amnesty for all who had cooperated with the British.⁴¹ The Viceroy reported to Salisbury that the Afghan people seemed pleased with the Treaty.⁴² Lytton proclaimed, in a letter to a friend, that his "resolute but not immoderate effort" had produced the result which advocates of non-interference had sought fruitlessly for so long. He had achieved a viable relationship with Afghanistan "with the smallest possible loss of life."⁴³ Not everyone was as confident about the results of the negotiations with Yakub Khan. The Amir had little choice but to agree with British conditions. The Russians had refused to assist and advised his father to make peace with England. His years of imprisonment and acquisition of the throne by default had not given him a strong base of support. The new Amir's signature on the Treaty of Gandamak by no means assured its realization.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Translation of a Proclamation by the Amir of Afghanistan, June 1879 in SP, LVI, Afghanistan No. 1 (1879), C. 2401, 718.

⁴² Viceroy to Secretary of State, 2 July 1879 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan (1880), "Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan," C. 2457, 407.

⁴³ Lytton to Mrs. Morley, 1 June 1879 in India Office Library, Lytton Collection, "Correspondence," Eur E 218.522/16 & 17:

⁴⁴ Campbell, The Afghan Frontier, 67; Northbrook, Brief Account, 29-30.

The Viceroy did seem to have accomplished his objectives. He had removed Russian influence from Kabul, gained strategic points along the Northwest Frontier and won the long-coveted right to place British agents at Kabul. He lost no time, therefore, in arranging the first legation to Afghanistan.

The "man-on-the-spot" seemed to have accomplished his objectives. He had succeeded in forcing the Afghan government to accept British European agents at Kabul. The cost of his victory was more than the Home government had anticipated but it could not risk censure of the Viceroy without political injury and loss of the opportunity to make strategic improvements on the frontier. The unexpected death of Shere Ali and his replacement by Yakub Khan, who had little support guaranteed, however, additional obstacles for the British in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER VII

WAR - PHASE II
August 1879 - August 1881

The Viceroy chose Pierre Louis Napoleon Cavagnari to head the long-awaited British Mission to Kabul. Cavagnari's father had been a French officer killed in the Napoleonic wars. He returned with his mother to her English home after his father's death.¹ A rather colorful gentleman, he had served successfully for several years as a Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner in the Northwest Frontier areas of the Indian Empire. His style when dealing with refractory tribesmen had earned the epithet "butcher and bolt"² and he rarely remained anywhere long without provoking an altercation. Perpetually sanguine, he had a knack for seeing only what pleased him.³

Numerous British officials, including General Roberts, felt uneasy about the Mission's prospects.⁴ They remembered the ill-fated British Mission to Kabul in the 1830s. Cavagnari himself calculated the odds at four to

¹Edwards, The Great Game, 99-100.

²Thorburn, Asiatic Neighbours, 157.

³Edwards, The Great Game, 100.

⁴Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 178-79

one he would die on the assignment.⁵ He departed for Kabul stating in his flamboyant manner, "...if my death sets the red line on the Hindu Kush, I don't care..."⁶

The British delegation entered Afghan territory on 19 July 1879. The Afghans received the Mission in a most gracious manner according to General Roberts who escorted it.⁷

Cavagnari met with Yakub Khan shortly after his arrival at Kabul. He advised the Amir to inform General Kaufmann of the Treaty of Gandamak's conditions regarding Russo-Afghan relations.⁸

The Afghans presumed the Amir would pay the troops and reduce the heavy taxes caused by the war now that the British had arrived at Kabul. Yakub Khan allegedly had contributed to that report.⁹ Return of military contingents from Herat intensified disorder in the city. The Herati soldiers, with little to do, wandered the city criticizing both the Amir and the English delegation. Yakub Khan cautioned Cavagnari to stay within his

⁵Hanna, The Second Afghan War, III, 15.

⁶K. H. M. Diver, Kabul to Kandahar (London: Peter Davies, 1935) 45.

⁷Roberts To Viceroy, 20 July 1879 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), "Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Afghanistan," C. 2457, 411.

⁸Ibid., Cavagnari Interview with Amir, 25 July 1879, 422; Yakub Khan to Kaufmann, 26 July 1879, 418.

⁹Ibid., Diary of British Embassy at Kabul, 27 July to 2 August 1879, 432.

cantonment at the Bala Hissar (high fortress) for a few days until he had pacified the discontented soldiers.¹⁰ General Daoud Shah offered the men a furlough which they refused, demanding their back pay and the release of their commander from prison.¹¹ The Amir told Cavagnari several days later he had paid the troops and seized their ammunition.¹² More riots occurred in the third week of August, however, because of claims for overdue pay.¹³

Yakub Khan seemed unable to overcome his weaknesses and garner the support vital to a ruler in Afghanistan. His inability to pay the soldiers had estranged them. His meddling in military affairs had begun to disaffect his generals.¹⁴ Daoud Shah, his most influential military leader, appeared ready to align with the anti-Yakub faction whose force increased rapidly when the Amir refused to compromise with their demands in any way.

The Viceroy received news in the early hours of 5 September that rebellious troops had attacked the

¹⁰Ibid., Cavagnari to India Government, 7 August 1879, 424.

¹¹Ibid., Diary of British Embassy Kabul, 3 August 1879, 434.

¹²Ibid., Diary of British Embassy Kabul, 10-16 August 1879, 435.

¹³Ibid., Diary of British Embassy Kabul, 17-23 August 1879, 456-57.

¹⁴Ibid., Diary of British Embassy Kabul, 10-16 August 1879, 435.

British residence at Kabul two days before.¹⁵ The India government later received various contradictory reports on the attack on the British Embassy. The majority of these accounts agreed, however, that several regiments had gone to the Bala Hissar in the morning to demand their back pay. They mutineed when the Afghan Government did not yield, somehow seized weapons and attacked the nearby British residence.¹⁶ By evening all British and most native members of the Mission had died either from gun shot wounds or the fire set to the residence in the late afternoon.¹⁷

Yakub Khan claimed he had done everything possible to save Cavagnari and his Mission. He first sent General Daoud Shah to quell the disturbance but the soldiers attacked and wounded him so seriously no one expected the General to recover.¹⁸ The Amir then despatched his son "armed" with a Koran and accompanied by several mullahs (Moslem religious men). The soldiers ignored them.¹⁹

¹⁵Ibid., Viceroy to Cranbrook, 15 September 1879, 444.

¹⁶Ibid., Statements Regarding the Disaster at Kabul, 445; Viceroy to Secretary of State, 6 September 1879; Statement of Ali Hasan, 17 September 1879, 482-83.

¹⁷Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, 6 September 1879, 437.

¹⁸Ibid., Yakub Khan to Sirdar Sher Ali Khan, 4 September 1879, 465; Statement of Sepoy Muhammed Dost, 18 September 1879, 471.

¹⁹Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, 6 September 1879, 437.

Most observers contradicted the Amir's claims. One stated that Daoud Shah actually had helped precipitate the riot by telling the soldiers to go see their shulzen (wife's lover), meaning Cavagnari, if they wanted money.²⁰ Another report maintained Yakub Khan, mostly concerned with his own safety, did little to stop the attack. In fact, parts of his army had remained faithful to him and would have intervened for the British if the Amir had ordered them to do so.²¹

The India government, after considering all the reports, concluded the Amir had not been involved in the assault.²² It determined, more significantly, that Yakub Khan had insufficient authority over his people to enforce the conditions of the Treaty of Gandamak. In consequence, the Government decided to send a British army to restore that authority. The Viceroy assured Yakub he personally had nothing to fear as long as he had been truthful about his lack of complicity in the massacre on the Mission.²³ Lytton ordered General Massey and his troops t

²⁰Ibid., Statement of Ali Hasan, 16 September 1879, 482-83.

²¹Ibid., Captain Conally, Ali Khel, to Cranbrook, 10 September 1879, 451; Government of India to Cranbrook, 15 September 1879, 439.

²²Ibid., Government of India to Cranbrook, 15 September 1879, 444; Donald Stewart to Mrs. Stewart, 28 September 1879 in Elsmie, Sir Donald Stewart, 288.

²³India Government to Amir, 13 September 1879 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), C. 2457, 452.

join Roberts at Ali Khel.²⁴

Chaotic conditions in Herat equalled those of Kabul.²⁵ Yakub Khan had appointed his brother Ayub Governor of Herat in March in an attempt to quiet the disturbances of unpaid troops there.²⁶ Six months later the soldiers at Herat had not been paid.²⁷ The Amir could not pay his army. He had no money because he had no authority. The cession of Afghan territory to the British had erased whatever token power Yakub had possessed. The Amir, his son and General Daoud, recovered from his wound, sought refuge at the camp of General Baker at Kushi on 27 September.²⁸

The India government resolved to penalize the Afghan nation as a whole unlike the previous year with Shere Ali. They instructed General Roberts, however, to reserve harsh punishment for those directly involved in

²⁴Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, 6 September 1879, 437.

²⁵Ibid., Thomson to Salisbury, 23 September 1879, 410; Thomson, 23 September 1879 in SP, LXXVIII, Central Asia No. 1 (1880), "Further Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," 242.

²⁶Letter From Herat, 16 March 1879 in SP, LXXVIII.

²⁷Thomson to Salisbury, 21 September 1879 in SP, LXXVII, Central Asia No. 1 (1880), 241.

²⁸Roberts To Viceroy, 27 September 1879 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), LIII, C. 2457, 475; Roberts to Lyall, 29 September 1879, 518-19.

the attack on the Mission. Roberts successfully occupied the city of Kabul by mid-October. He issued a proclamation stating he would inflict a severe penalty for the deaths of the British legation and destroy all structures in the city which prevented effective military occupation.²⁹ Reports vary but Roberts probably executed less than 100 persons.³⁰ He closed the announcement with the hope that the British presence in Kabul in time would transform the malice of the Afghans toward the British into friendship.³¹

The Amir notified General Roberts on 13 October that he wished to abdicate. The General requested he reconsider but Yakub remained determined to give up his throne.³² He told Roberts, his "only desire is to be set free, and end my days in liberty. I have conceived an utter aversion for these people."³³ Yakub Khan left the British encampment on 1 December for India where he

²⁹ Ibid., A. C. Lyall to General F. S. Roberts, 29 September 1879, 503-04.

³⁰ Low and Sanders, "The History of England," 310; See also: Da Costa, Scientific Frontier, 107; Edwardes, The Great Game, 112-13.

³¹ Roberts to Lyall, 16 October 1879 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), C. 2457, 553.

³² Ibid., Viceroy to Cranbrook, 23 October 1879, 539-40.

³³ Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 236.

remained until his death in 1923.³⁴

The Amir's abdication required an official proclamation from the British government. Salisbury sent a draft proposal to the India government which instructed Roberts to announce that:

. . . the Amir, having by his own free will abdicated, has left Afghanistan without a Government. In consequence of the shameful outrage upon the Envoy and suite, the British Government has been compelled to occupy by force of arms Kabul and to take military possession of other parts of Afghanistan .³⁵

Sir Mortimer Durand, an advisor to the Viceroy, described the draft as the "absurd affectation of preaching historical morality to the Afghans."³⁶ He challenged the necessity of issuing any proclamation and argued that the one proposed by the Government could only serve to increase the bitterness of the Afghan people. Roberts agreed to have Durand re-draft the proclamation. Not entirely pleased with his own less dictatorial version he, nonetheless, believed it less inflammatory than the Government's.³⁷ The British government genuinely did not wish to create added animosity but it did want to convince the Afghans the British would tolerate no further insult.

³⁴ Roberts to Lyall, Kabul Diary, 30 November to 6 December in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), C. 2457, p. 596; Dupree, Afghanistan, 409.

³⁵ Ibid., Secretary of State to Viceroy, 22 October 1879, 539.

³⁶ Sykes, Durand, 96

³⁷ Ibid.

Roberts accordingly informed the people he meant to remain in Kabul until his Government achieved a satisfactory settlement. Meanwhile it would be in their own interests to be cooperative.³⁸

British armies had not subdued other parts of Afghanistan as successfully as General Roberts at Kabul. Rumors of Ayub Khan's plans to attack Kandahar reached the India Government in late November.³⁹ A report from Kabul indicated that religious leaders, notably the Mullah Musht-i-Alam of the National Party, agitated against the British.⁴⁰ The Viceroy and his Council faced renewed hostilities and the necessity to make a new decision about the future of Afghanistan. At least for the present they could not support an Afghanistan united under one government.⁴¹ Consequently, Lytton revived a policy first conceived in August 1878 to "break up the Afghan Kingdom," install a ruler amicable to Britain and retain territory sufficient to safeguard the Northwest

³⁸Edwardes, The Great Game, 112-13; Dacosta, Scientific Frontier, 107.

³⁹Thomson to Salisbury, 30 November 1879 in SP LXXVII, Central Asia No. 1 (1880), 251.

⁴⁰Roberts to Foreign Secretary India Government, 7 December 1879 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 1 (1880), C. 2457, 586.

⁴¹Ibid., Governor General of India in Council to India Office, 11 December 1879, 574-75; Government of India to Cranbrook, 7 January 1880 in LXX Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), "Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan including the Recognition of Sirdar Abdul Rahman as Amir of Kabul," C. 2776, 42.

Frontier.⁴² He resolved to relinquish Herat to Persia because its great distance from Kabul made supervision ineffective. He also considered handing over the Sistan to Persia and decided to place Kandahar under a member of the ruling family who would permit Britain to garrison troops there. Kurram, Pishin, Sibi and Kabul would remain under military control until all opposition ceased.⁴³

The British government lacked the skilled but friendly ruler necessary to consolidate the country it had succeeded in dividing by chance if not by choice. Of all the potential candidates only Abdur Rahman possessed the necessary qualities.⁴⁴ The family of Abdur Rahman already had made overtures to the British at Kabul on his behalf.⁴⁵

Abdur Rahman's ten year exile in Russia did make the British somewhat uneasy. He had, however, not only strength, but an additional attribute which greatly attracted the Viceroy. Lytton hoped to retain Kandahar and several other outposts on the frontier. He also

⁴²Lytton to Cranbrook, 3 August 1878 in Balfour, Personal and Literary Letters, 113-17.

⁴³Government of India to Cranbrook, 7 January 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), C. 2776, 44-45.

⁴⁴Viceroy to Lepel Griffin, 6 March 1880 in India Office Library, Lytton Collection, "Confidential Correspondence Relating to Sirdar Abdul Rahman," Mss Eur E 522/16, 6.

⁴⁵Donald Stewart to Foreign Secretary India Government, 3 March 1880 in LC, "Afghanistan (1880), Mss Eur E 218/12A, 4.

wished to separate Herat from the Afghan kingdom. One of his military advisors informed him that, several years earlier, Abdur Rahman had asked the Wali (governor) of Kandahar to help him overthrow Shere Ali. If successful, Abdur Rahman would take the north while the Wali would have the west of Afghanistan. Although this coup did not take place, Abdur Rahman's proposal indicated he might accept a diminished realm.⁴⁶ Lytton advised the Home government to acknowledge Abdur Rahman as the legal successor of his grandfather Dost Mohammed as soon as possible.⁴⁷ message from Cranbrook rather dampened the Viceroy's enthusiasm. He admonished Lytton to delay a final decision on the matter of a new ruler until the Afghans completely understood "we can do what we will."⁴⁸

On 21 March the Viceroy instructed Lepel Griffin at Kabul to find Abdur Rahman and begin negotiations contingent on his agreement to the separation of western from eastern Afghanistan and the forfeit of Herat and Kandahar.⁴⁹ Abdur Rahman ignored Griffin's first overture. Later he declined the proposal stating that, as Dost

⁴⁶Viceroy to Lepel Griffin, 6 March 1880 in LC, "Confidential Correspondence Relating to Sirdar Abdul Rahman," Mss Eur E 218.522/6, 7.

⁴⁷Viceroy to Secretary of State, 14 March 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), C. 2776, 47.

⁴⁸Cranbrook to Viceroy, 13 March 1880 in LC, Mss Eur E 218.522/6, 32.

⁴⁹Ibid., Viceroy to Lepel Griffin, 21 March 1880, 21-24.

Mohammed's successor, he was entitled to all his territory.⁵⁰

In April Prince de Giers advised Lord Dufferin, new Ambassador to St. Petersburg, that Afghans near Kunduz, in the far northeast of Afghanistan, had recognized Abdur Rahman as Amir.⁵¹ Abdur Rahman contacted British officials at Kabul two days later. He stated that the rivalry between Britain and Afghanistan had caused severe financial problems for the Afghan people which only peace could solve. He suggested Britain and Russia combine as protectors of a nonpartisan Afghanistan.⁵² The Viceroy unofficially instructed Griffin to tell Abdur Rahman the British government wished to negotiate but would not bargain on certain points. Lytton sent these directions unofficially because he did not want Cabinet members to discover Abdur Rahman had requested negotiations. He believed bargaining with him would implicate Russia. Cabinet opinions might not fully correspond to his,⁵³ therefore, he quickly warned Cranbrook that Gladstone, the Opposition leader, must not hear of Abdur

⁵⁰Dacosta, Scientific Frontier, 110-11.

⁵¹Dufferin to Salisbury, 20 April 1880 in Confidential Prints 539, 4277, "Further Correspondence Respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia," 161.

⁵²Lepel Griffin to India Government Foreign Secretary, 22 April 1880 in LC, Mss Eur E 218.522/6, 43.

⁵³Ibid., Viceroy to Lepel Griffin, 46-48.

Rahman's "clumsy bait." Disraeli's dissolution of Parliament and the impending election made secrecy imperative.⁵⁴

The approaching general election prompted Lytton to reach a quick agreement with Abdur Rahman. The Opposition had turned the Government's assertive foreign policies into a Party issue.⁵⁵ Gladstone delivered a speech poignantly and dramatically explaining his perception of the inherent flaw in Disraeli's Afghan policy. He admonished his listeners to:

. . . remember the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows is as inviolable in the eye of the almighty God as can be your own. Remember that He who has united you as human beings in the same flesh and blood, has bound you by the law of mutual love, is not limited by the shores of this island, is not bound by the limits of Christian civilization, that it passes over the whole surface of the earth; and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its unmeasured scope.⁵⁶

Gladstone's nicely turned Social Darwinist phrases combined with the usual British tendency toward caution to decisively defeat the Conservative Government in April 1880.⁵⁷ The Queen's aversion to Gladstone delayed formation of the new Government. Refusal of important liberals

⁵⁴Ibid., Viceroy to Cranbrook, 27 April 1880, 89.

⁵⁵Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 313; Sykes, Durand, 119.

⁵⁶Bilgrami, Afghanistan and British India, 199.

⁵⁷The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, III, 89-90.

to serve without him forced her to accept Gladstone as Prime Minister⁵⁸ with Granville as his Foreign Secretary and Hartington replacing Cranbrook at the India Office.⁵⁹ Lord Ripon⁶⁰ accepted the Viceroyalty on April 28.⁶¹

Ripon's appointment emphasized the new Government's approach toward India. Lytton had epitomized to the Liberals the aggressive qualities of Conservative foreign policy.⁶² Ripon, in contrast to his predecessor, was very knowledgeable about Indian affairs. Over twenty years earlier he had contended that all Englishmen should view India as one of their primary concerns. He served as Undersecretary at the India Office in 1861 and Secretary in 1866 where Lawrence's non-interventionism had appealed strongly to him.⁶³ He believed the aggressive approach of Disraeli had precipitated the war with Afghanistan.⁶⁴ The new Viceroy proposed the Government give Afghanistan a type of client status in which the Amir

⁵⁸Zetland, Disraeli, 11, 352.

⁵⁹Rastogi, Indo-Afghan Relations, 14.

⁶⁰George Frederick Samuel Robinson -- Viscount Goderich.

⁶¹Lucien Wolf, Life of the First Marquis of Ripon, K.G., P.C., G.C.S.I., D.C.L., etc., I (London: John Murray, 1921) 318.

⁶²Rastogi, Indo-Afghan Relations, 14-15; S. Gopal, The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon 1880-1884 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) I.

⁶³Gopal, Ripon, 3

⁶⁴Wolf, The First Marquis of Ripon, I, 314.

retained complete authority over his internal affairs while the British would advise, not direct, his foreign policy.⁶⁵

Lytton, however, had left Ripon with only two immediate alternatives -- withdrawal or make Afghanistan part of the Empire. Thus Ripon, like Lytton, turned to Abdur Rahman. In order to stabilize the new Amir, he proposed the return of Kandahar, military support when necessary and a treaty substantial enough to keep Abdur Rahman from Russia. He advised the retention of Pishin and Sibi because they provided excellent positions from which to scrutinize observance of the treaty.⁶⁶

The rumored march of Ayub Khan and a sizeable army from Herat to Kandahar commanded Ripon's immediate attention. He ordered General Primrose in early June to bar Ayub from crossing the Helmand.⁶⁷ Gradual disaffection of the troops under Shere Ali, the British appointed Wali of Kandahar, posed the most serious threat. The number of his soldiers consistently diminished throughout the month of July. Many of the deserters headed toward Herat to join Ayub Khan.⁶⁸ Several regiments revolted, taking

⁶⁵Gopal, Ripon, 12.

⁶⁶Wolf, The First Marquis of Ripon, II, 35, 38.

⁶⁷Viceroy to Primrose, 7 July 1880 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 3 (1880), C. 2690, 747.

⁶⁸Ibid., Quetta Agent to Government of India, July 1880, 747; 13 July 1880, 748; See also: Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 331.

all the supplies with them, as the Wali's army prepared to cross the Helmand. Sir Frederick Haines, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, sent permission on 22 July to General Primrose at Kandahar to attack Ayub Khan "if you consider you are strong enough to do so."⁶⁹ Reports reached Primrose on the same day that Ayub's army had crossed the river and that General Burrows had moved his troops to a safer place in the event of a night attack.⁷⁰ In spite of these precautions, Ayub Khan defeated the force under Burrows on 28 July 1880 at Maiwand, about midway between Kandahar and the Helmand river.⁷¹ Primrose urgently cabled for assistance.⁷² Earlier in July the Viceroy had complained to Haines about the weakness of the troops at Kandahar.⁷³ Ripon ordered Roberts at Kabul to go to the aid of Primrose and the remains of Burrow's force for the siege which inevitably would follow Ayub

⁶⁹Ibid., Commander-in-Chief to Primrose, 28 July 1880, 863.

⁷⁰Ibid., British Resident at Kandahar to Government of India, 23 July 1880, 751.

⁷¹Ibid., Governor of Bombay to Secretary of State, 28 July 1880, 752.

⁷²Ibid., British Agent Quetta to Government of India, 28 July 1880, 757.

⁷³E. B. Johnson to Ripon, 4 July 1880 in Great Britain, India, Miscellaneous Public Documents, B.P. 7/7, "Sirdar Ayub Khan's Invasion of Southern Afghanistan," 16; Ripon to F. Haines, 4 July 1880 in B.P. 7/10, "Defeat of General Burrow's Brigade and Military Operations in Consequence," 23.

Khan's victory.⁷⁴

Roberts received a message from Ayub Khan in mid-August stating that he wished to negotiate a peace with the British.⁷⁵ Roberts replied that no discussion could take place until Ayub surrendered.⁷⁶ The army of Ayub Khan retreated slowly toward Herat while Roberts moved closer to Kandahar.⁷⁷ Robert's army finally appeared at Kandahar on the last day of August.⁷⁸ Ayub Khan, with about 15,000 men, waited on the north bank of the Arghandab.⁷⁹ Robert's army avenged the British defeat at Maiwand at about noon the next day, capturing Ayub's camp and scattering his troops.⁸⁰ Ayub fled toward Herat.⁸¹

⁷⁴St. John to Government of India, 2 August 1880 in SP, LIII, Afghanistan No. 3 (1880), C. 2690, 761; Viceroy to Secretary of State, 3 August 1880, 790; Government of India to Governor General of Quetta, 9 August 1880, 815.

⁷⁵Ibid., Ayub Khan to Roberts, 19 August 1880, C. 2736, 856-57.

⁷⁶Ibid., Roberts to Ayub Khan, 19 August 1880, 857.

⁷⁷Ibid., Quetta Agent to Government of India, August 1880, 836.

⁷⁸Ibid., Roberts to Government of India, 2 September 1880, 846.

⁷⁹Ibid., Quetta Agent to Government of India, 844.

⁸⁰Ibid., Roberts to India Government, 4 September 1880, 847; St. John to India Government, 4 September 1880, 847.

⁸¹Ibid., St. John to India Government, 6 September 1880, 850.

Greatly embellished descriptions of the British defeat at Maiwand had aroused the Afghans in the north emphasizing the need for completion of negotiations with Abdur Rahman.⁸² Ripon asked Sir Donald Stewart, who had replaced Roberts at Kabul, to explain to the new Amir the British wished to transfer control of the city to him but could not commit themselves to a fixed subsidy either of money or arms. If Abdur Rahman refused these terms, Stewart should negotiate with National Party leaders to establish a member of Yakub Khan's family as de facto ruler of Kabul and remain there with his troops for support.⁸³ Abdur Rahman did accept. General Stewart publicly acknowledged him as Amir of Kabul on 22 July.⁸⁴ The British evacuation of Kabul occurred on 11 and 12 August.⁸⁵

Having handed over the north to the new Amir, the British tackled the more complex problem of the south. The retention of Kandahar aroused great debate both at home and abroad. From Gibraltar, Lord Napier of Magdalla argued that revenues and increased trade from Kandahar

⁸²Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 338.

⁸³Lyall to Stewart, 24 July 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), C. 2776, 75.

⁸⁴Ibid., Government of India, Foreign Department to Hartington, 24 July 1880, 78.

⁸⁵Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, 5 August 1880, 91; Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5 August 1880, 91.

would offset costs of the withdrawal to the old frontier.⁸⁶ Retired Major-General Henry Green, staunch supporter of the Forward policy, advocated possession of Kandahar to protect the passes to India, particularly necessary if Russia took Merv which looked possible.⁸⁷ General Haines supported retention in order to observe the activities of Abdur Rahman. He added that surrendering Kandahar "would be to relinquish any reason had for war."⁸⁸ This comment undoubtedly evoked anxiety for Conservatives because Disraeli quite adamantly had insisted he had not sought a war with Shere Ali to rectify the frontier. Commander Haines, however, did have several other reasons for retaining Kandahar. As a military man, he speculated a Russian army might gain access to Kabul via Kandahar. He also believed, like Napier, Kandahar might prove a valuable source of revenue. His judgement that the Afghan people would view the British cession of Kandahar as a sign of weakness,⁸⁹ "for in Asia the strong never

⁸⁶Note on Kandahar by General Lord Napier of Magdalla, 12 October 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 2 (1881), "Papers Relative to the Occupation of Kandahar," C. 2811, 223-25.

⁸⁷Ibid., Memorandum on the Rectification of the Northwest Frontier of India by Major-General Henry Green, 30 December 1878, 170-73.

⁸⁸Ibid., Minute by His Excellency Commander-in-Chief in India on Retention of Kandahar, 25 November 1880, 227-31.

⁸⁹Ibid., 231.

retreat,"⁹⁰ constituted his fundamental objection. James Fergusson, Governor of Bombay, also emphasized the possible loss of prestige he felt more destructive than a military defeat.⁹¹

Those who resisted the retention of Kandahar argued that the complications and expense far outweighed the advantages.⁹² The most vocal opposition came from members of the new Government who had criticized Disraeli's policies toward Afghanistan from the outset. Lord Hartington contended the new Amir could never strengthen himself without Kandahar. He also pointed out that nothing supported the claim of pro-retentionists that the people of Kandahar would submit willingly to continued British rule. He did not agree the Kandaharis would see British withdrawal as a sign of weakness but as an affirmation they did not intend to extend the Indian Empire.⁹³

Hartington and his supporters triumphed and advised the Government of India by early December to begin arrangements to evacuate Kandahar, the Khyber pass and

⁹⁰Davies, Border, 13.

⁹¹James Fergusson to Ripon, 20 June 1880 in "Military Operations in Afghanistan," B.P. 7/10, 9-10.

⁹²G. J. Wolseley, Memorandum on Retention of Kandahar, 20 November 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 2 (1881), C. 2811, p. 226.

⁹³Hartington to Governor General in Council, 21 May 1880 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), C. 2776, 67-71.

Kurram regions.⁹⁴ Afridi chiefs received the Khyber by a treaty which obligated them to keep it open to the British in return for a subsidy.⁹⁵ Ripon also asked Abdur Rahman how soon he could assume administration of Kandahar.⁹⁶ For nearly a month the Amir had requested a meeting with the Viceroy.⁹⁷ Ripon had responded that these important issues could not wait until he could arrange a state visit for the new Amir.⁹⁸ Abdur Rahman expressed his pleasure at acquiring Kandahar, stated he would like personally to attend to its acquisition and defense against Ayub Khan but he could not leave Kabul yet.⁹⁹ He agreed to send an envoy but could not authorize him to make any agreements nor could he assure his

⁹⁴Ibid., To Governor General in Council, 11 November 1880, 127.

⁹⁵Commissioner of Peshawar to Government of India, 9 February 1881 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 5 (1881), "Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan including the Transfer of the Administration of Kandahar to Amir Abdul Rahman Khan," C. 3090, 315; Agreement with Government by Khyber Afridis, February 1881, 330.

⁹⁶Ibid., Viceroy to Amir of Kabul, 30 January 1881, 286.

⁹⁷Ibid., Amir to Viceroy, 28 December 1880, 270.

⁹⁸Ibid., Viceroy to Abdur Rahman, 7 January 1881, 270-71.

⁹⁹Abdur Rahman to Viceroy, 13 February 1881 in "Proceedings at Kandahar Subsequent to Ayub Khan's Defeat," B. P. 7/7, II, 28-29.

appearance at Kandahar by 15 April as requested.¹⁰⁰ The Viceroy agreed to a few day's grace.¹⁰¹

The Amir's officials began arriving at Kandahar during the first two weeks in April. Lt. Colonel St. John, officiating British Agent, formally assigned Kandahar to Abdur Rahman on 12 April. Nine days later British troops withdrew.¹⁰² Ayub Khan continued his attempt to capture Kandahar. The Amir's troops defeated him on 22 September. Once again he fled to Herat.¹⁰³ Abdur Rahman took the city of Herat in mid-October. Ayub escaped to Persia.¹⁰⁴ The Persian government later agreed to prohibit Ayub from any area near the Afghan border.¹⁰⁵

The last trace of direct British involvement in Afghanistan focused on the districts of Pishin and Sibi claimed in the Treaty of Gandamak. British officials had administered these districts for nearly two years. The inhabitants assumed they could rely on British protection. In fact, the British had brought stable government

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., Amir of Kabul to Viceroy, 26 January 1881, 288; Amir to Commissioner of Peshawar, 6 March 1881 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 5 (1881), C. 3090, 328.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Viceroy to Amir, 18 March 1881, 328-29.

¹⁰² Ibid., St. John to Lyall, 1 June 1881, 357.

¹⁰³ Lyall to Ripon, 25 September 1881 in B.P. 7/7, I, 81.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Viceroy to Secretary of State, October 1881, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Thomson to Viceroy, 20 October 1881,

for the first time to these area.¹⁰⁶ In consequence, Britain decided to retain Pishin and Sibi. In 1887 the two districts became part of British Biluchistan.¹⁰⁷

Russia had not been idle while the British fought in Afghanistan. A Russian expedition successfully overcame the Turcomans at Goek Teppe on 23 January 1881.¹⁰⁸ Defeat of the Turcomans was probably the most significant Russian achievement in Central Asia. It served the purpose of arresting the pilferage which made trade unprofitable. In the larger perspective, it allowed the Russians to move their Central Asian headquarters from Orenburg, in the east, west to the Caspian, giving the Russian government significant oversight of Central Asia.¹⁰⁹

The British government received a report in early May 1881 that the Russians prepared a Mission to acknowledge the new Amir of Afghanistan and to offer him a treaty

¹⁰⁶ Government of India to Secretary of State for India, 2 February 1881 in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 3 (1881), "Further Papers Relating to the Occupation of Kandahar," C. 2852, 238.

¹⁰⁷ George H. Curzon, "The 'Scientific Frontier' An Accomplished Fact," The Nineteenth Century, June 1888; Wolf, The First Marquis of Ripon, II, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Dufferin to Granville, 26 January 1881 in SP, XCVIII, Central Asia No. 3 (1881), "Further Correspondence Respecting Affairs in Central Asia," C. 2844, 386.

¹⁰⁹ Roberts, Forty-One Years in India, II, 391; Francis Henry Skrine, The Expansion of Russia (Cambridge at the University Press, 1915) 241.

of commerce.¹¹⁰ Denials poured out of St. Petersburg. Prince Lobanov, Russian Ambassador to Great Britain, told Granville in July that his Government had forbidden its Central Asian officials to engage in any direct communication with Abdur Rahman.¹¹¹ De Gier's assistant, Baron Jomini, temporized on Lobanov's statement several weeks later stating that Russian officials might contact the Amir if the British government agreed.¹¹² Diplomatically, the Russians moved carefully. Proximity, however, rendered their subtlety irrelevant. With the annexation of the Turcoman territories less than 300 miles, with no notable physical barrier, separated Russia from Afghanistan.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Granville to Wyndham, 14 May 1881 in Confidential Prints 539, 4550, "Further Correspondence Respecting Affairs in Asia," 19.

¹¹¹ Ibid., Granville to Wyndham, 11 July 1881, 4631, 20.

¹¹² Ibid., Wyndham to Granville, 20 July 1881, 30.

¹¹³ Ibid., Mallet to Tenterden, 26 August 1881, 54-56.

CONCLUSION

The British achieved few tenable rewards from their conflict with the Afghan government. They had excluded Russia from Kabul but not restrained the Russian government from extending its control in Central Asia which by 1884 would reach to the Amu Darya;¹ the northern border of Afghanistan. The British government hoped the ruler they had chosen for Afghanistan would maintain his country as a buffer between the Russian and Indian Empires. Abdur Rahman did allow the British to dominate Afghanistan's foreign relations including the delimitation of his borders. Regrettably, he also reacted to the intense foreign involvement his country experienced in the late 1870s by "landlocking" Afghanistan. Primarily concerned with preserving the integrity of the Afghan people, he determined to exclude all foreign interference in internal affairs. He dedicated so much time to security measures that he had little remaining for internal development efforts.² The British, in effect, were responsible for retarding the internal growth of Afghanistan.

¹Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan, 130.

²Personal Communication with Hasan Kakar, August 1978.

The British gained control of two small, but strategically located areas on their Northwest Frontier. Command of Pishin and Sibi meant they could keep open the passes into Afghanistan and better protect the Indian Empire. They were unable, however, to rectify the inadequacies of the Northwest Frontier as successfully as they had hoped. Several other approaches to India still existed for an aggressor who could secure the assistance of the Afghans. That the results did not justify the means may indicate that the Disraeli Government did not design a policy intended to provoke a war. Disraeli and his Foreign Secretary Salisbury initially continued a policy toward Afghanistan begun by their predecessors. Lawrence's approach cannot accurately be described as one of complete non-interference. While it is true that as Viceroy he did not acknowledge any of the three contenders for the sovereignty of Afghanistan after Dost Mohammed's death, he did recognize unofficially all three at various times as de facto ruler. A policy of strict non-intervention would have required that he wait until one of the rivals triumphed before making any recognitions. Lord Lawrence and the two subsequent Viceroys, Mayo and Northbrook, all periodically supplied Shere Ali, once he acquired the throne, with money and munitions. In 1872 and 1873 the British government involved itself in Afghan affairs by mediating with the Russian government for a border agreement and delimiting the border between

Afghanistan and Persia in the Sistan. Finally, the question of British agents in Afghanistan did not originate with the Disraeli Government. Lawrence, Mayo and Northbrook queried both Dost Mohammed and Shere Ali on the subject but, unlike their successors, they accepted the refusals given.

It is difficult to deny that Disraeli and Salisbury intended to employ more assertive means to keep Russia from extending her hegemony over Afghanistan. But a series of other factors determined that their methods end in armed conflict and prevented a more significant restructuring of the Northwest Frontier by negotiation.

The structure of the British Government, from monarch to viceroy, contributed heavily to the cause of war. Queen Victoria, responsive to Disraeli's appraisal of good foreign policy, offered her moral support and used her influence to discourage opposition. Disraeli and Salisbury, determined to use Afghanistan as an example of their toughened policy toward Russian encroachments in Central Asia, deliberately chose an inexperienced viceroy because they knew he would support them. They did not realize, however, that Lytton's temperament would cause him to go to extreme lengths, that he would ignore or even disobey orders in his attempt to fulfill his interpretation of their instructions. In fact, the Viceroy misconstrued Salisbury's directions from the beginning. The Foreign Secretary told Lytton to arrange for

a temporary mission to Kabul in order to show the Afghan people and Government they had nothing to fear from the British. He also authorized the Viceroy to offer Shere Ali an annual subsidy, an agreement to recognize his successors and aid against external threat. Salisbury did not stipulate that the Amir accept a British agent in Afghanistan as a condition for negotiations. Therefore, Lytton's insistence on this at the Peshawar Conference was not sanctioned by the Home government.³

Salisbury's methods also warrant consideration because he addressed neither his initial instructions nor the majority of his ensuing communications to the Governor-General in Council, but to the Viceroy alone. For example, Salisbury relayed his agreement to Lytton's decision to close the Peshawar meetings after the death of Syud Nur Mohammed by confidential communication to the Viceroy.⁴ Lytton later used one of these communiques to defend his termination of the meeting at Peshawar and refusal to send the British native agent back to the Amir's Court. Salisbury had told him to " adopt such

³Secretary of State to Government of India, 28 February 1876 in Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 447.

⁴Salisbury to Governor-General, 4 October 1877 in Great Britain, Parliament, Sessional Papers, LVI, Afghanistan (1878), "Correspondence Respecting the Relations of the British Government and that of Afghanistan Since the Accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan," 596-97.

measures for the protection and tranquility of the Northwest Frontier as circumstances of the moment may render expedient without regard to the wishes of the Ameer, or interests of his dynasty..."⁵

The Viceroy's interpretation of these circumstances deserves comment. Rarely is the Amir seen as more of a pawn between Russia and Britain than in the episode of the Kaufmann correspondence. The two Powers had excluded him in the delimitation of his northern border in 1872. Russia agreed to stay out of Afghanistan while Britain consented to keep the Amir within his own borders. Shere Ali accepted this decision in an attempt to assure British protection against the threat of Russian invasion. When the first letters arrived from Kaufmann, the Amir complained to the British but they scoffed at his fears and instructed him to reply. Lytton, however, complained to Salisbury, after the failure of the Peshawar Conference, that "there can be no doubt that the communications between General Kaufmann and Shere Ali exceed the requirement of mere exchanges of courtesy...."⁶ Shere Ali's refusal to discuss the possibility

⁵Viceroy to Cranbrook, 8 August 1878 in Great Britain, Foreign Office, Confidential Prints 539, 3871, "Further Correspondence Respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia," 309-10.

⁶Governor-General of India in Council to Salisbury, 3 May 1877 in SP, LXXX, Central Asia No. 1 (1878), "Correspondence Respecting Central Asia," 565.

of British agents provoked the Viceroy to seize the Kaufmann correspondence as an excuse to challenge the Amir.

Lytton, because of his unfamiliarity with oriental customs, did not realize that successful transactions with Asian rulers required a great deal of diplomacy and finesse. He chose rather to regard the Amir as uncivilized and perhaps even insane,⁷ and convinced Disraeli and Salisbury they must treat Shere Ali like a child and demand he "behave." Consequently, the Viceroy totally ignored promises made by former viceroys not to require British European agents in Afghanistan.⁸ Thus, when he received word of a Russian Mission on its way to Kabul, he assumed the Amir had invited it. Cranbrook, in defense of Lytton, later contended that, the Russian Mission was sent there for real and definite objects. Afghanistan was to be the basis for Russia to attack us. There is no doubt about it."⁹ The Amir may have requested Kaufmann send a delegation or he simply may have accepted a fait accompli once the Mission had crossed his border. Certainly the uncooperative attitude of the British at Peshawar gave him ample reason to despair.

⁷Fraser-Tytler, Afghanistan, 132.

⁸Speech of the Duke of Argyll, 20 February 1880 in Great Britain, Parliament, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Lords), CCL, 1023; Burne, British Agents, 1; Eastwick, Lytton, 19.

⁹Cranbrook, 20 February 1880, in CCL, 1057-58.

The unwillingness of Lytton to file the dissents of his Council as prescribed by regulations or to communicate officially with the Secretary of State for India in Council shows his tendency to abuse viceregal authority. In Parliament, the Chancellor of the Exchequer condoned Lytton's methods with the argument that Indian officials commonly sent sensitive information directly to the Secretary because formerly, under the East India Company Board of Directors, a Secret Committee had handled such matters.¹⁰ Sir William Muir, one of the dissenting members of the Viceroy's Council, objected to the practice stating that the lack of official communication between the Governments in India and London unfairly endangered the Council's prerogatives.¹¹

The Viceroy's failure to gauge the support of the Afghan peoples for their ruler also illustrates his ignorance of Afghanistan. He believed the constant internecine quarrels in Afghanistan inferred the people would hesitate to follow the Amir into a war with a great military power like Britain. Based on this misconception, Lytton issued the proclamation that the British quarreled with the Amir alone and not the people. This statement actually insulted the Afghans and united the majority in

¹⁰ Ibid., CCXLII, 2017-18.

¹¹ Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 1

support of Shere Ali.¹²

An important pressure group -- the military -- must share criticism for the mistaken idea that the Afghans would not resist a British invasion. Many of the Viceroy's military advisors, particularly General Roberts, had spent sufficient years in the Indian army to estimate more accurately the strength of the resistance. They should have predicted that complete subjection of the independent Afghans would not be as simple as Lytton claimed.¹³

Finally, no serious consideration of the responsibility of the Russian government for allowing one of their officials to despatch a delegation to Afghanistan seems to have occurred. Lytton did request his superiors to remind the Russians that the conditions of their Agreement in 1872 prohibited direct communication with the Amir. After the Treaty of Berlin ended the possibility of a war between Russia and Great Britain, the British, however, tendered few serious objections about Afghanistan to St. Petersburg. In fact, Britain appeared to intentionally ignore Russia's culpability and willingly accepted assurances that the Mission had innocent objectives. They preferred to see the Amir as the guilty party illicitly seeking Russian aid against them.

¹²Kakar, A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 224-25.

¹³Ibid., 279.

Many unforeseen circumstances exacerbated the fragile balance of peace between Afghanistan and Britain. The death of Shere Ali's son Abdulla Jan, for example, gave the Amir a normally legitimate reason to delay a decision about reception of the British Mission. It happened, however, at a time when the Viceroy needed a justification for the strong measures he had decided necessary to rid Afghanistan of Russian influence. The death of the Amir at first seemed a fortunate occurrence because it allowed the British to conclude a hasty treaty with his son. But a treaty does not ensure peace and Yakub Khan's inability to gain support from his father's subjects guaranteed further hostilities.

The attack on the Cavagnari Mission also might be considered a chance event. If Cavagnari had been less contentious, however, he might have prevented his own death and the renewal of war, by requesting his Government pay the Afghan soldiers. Lytton later wrote to Cranbrook explaining his decision to send Cavagnari to Kabul over the protests of many advisors. He contended that Yakub Khan had proposed Kabul as the location of the British Residency in order to protect it and to offer to his people visible evidence of the reestablished friendship between Afghanistan and Britain. Lytton concluded he had no tenable grounds for opposing Yakub since the Amir did not hesitate to have the Mission at his Capitol

city.¹⁴ No doubt Yakub did wish to observe the British Resident. The Viceroy, however, had not insisted upon having "tenable grounds" to oppose rulers of Afghanistan on any previous occasion.

Clearly, neither Lawrence's policy of "masterly inactivity" nor the "forward" policy of Disraeli was entirely responsible for precipitating the Second Anglo-Afghan war. In the words of Lord Curzon, a later Viceroy of India, "We owe our record of Afghan failure and disaster....to the amazing political incompetence that has with fine continuity been brought to bear upon our relations with successive Afghan rulers."¹⁵ No strong, consistent policy guided the decision-makers in their task. The war occurred rather as a result of a series of decisions designed to implement policies hampered by an inconclusive system of guidelines. The decision-makers chose options with short-range problem solving potential. Consequently, when the need for new decisions materialized in response to problems raised by the limitations of prior decisions, the impact of factors other than Government policy controlled the results. Protection of the Indian Empire indeed made Afghanistan important to the

¹⁴Lytton to Cranbrook in SP, LXX, Afghanistan No. 1 (1881), "Further Correspondence Relating to the Affairs of Afghanistan Including the Recognition of Sirdar Abdul Rahman Khan as Amir of Kabul," C. 2776, 39-40.

¹⁵Curzon, Russia in Central Asia, 356.

British. But the politics and temperaments of Government officials, the response of the "victim" and the element of chance led Britain into a second war with Afghanistan.

Figure 1.-The area of Afghanistan. Short dashed line indicates nominal modern border as of 1978; dotted lines indicate other modern borders.

Bamiyan	- Gandamak
· Herat	Jalalabad
- Kabul	Kh -- Khodja Saleh
Kn -- Kandahar	M - Mazar-i-Sharif

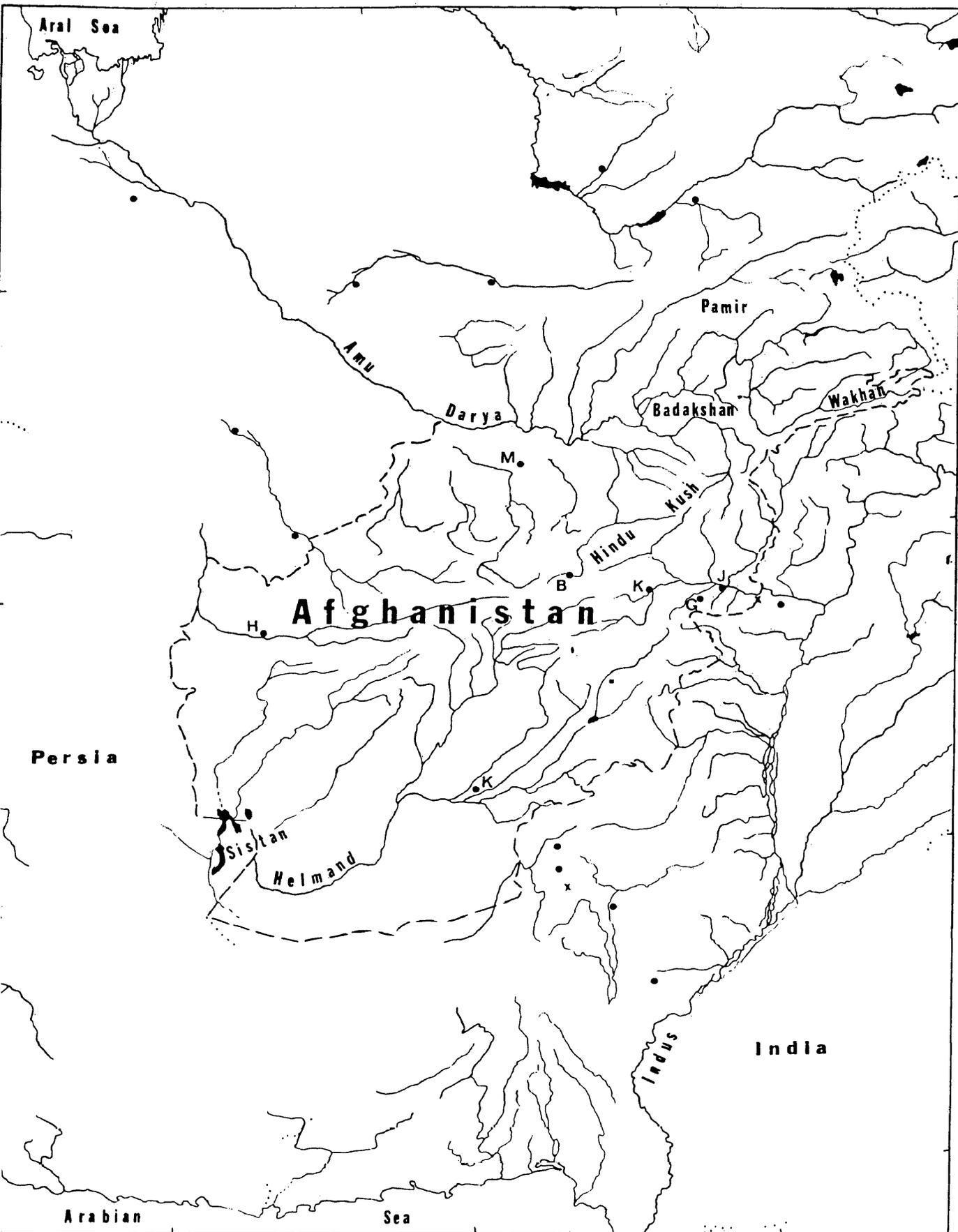


Figure 2.—Northwest Frontier of the British Indian Empire.

X Bo -- Bolan Pass

X Kh -- Khyber Pass

X S -- Shutergardan Pass

· Jacobabad

Peshawar

Pishin

· Quetta

Sibi

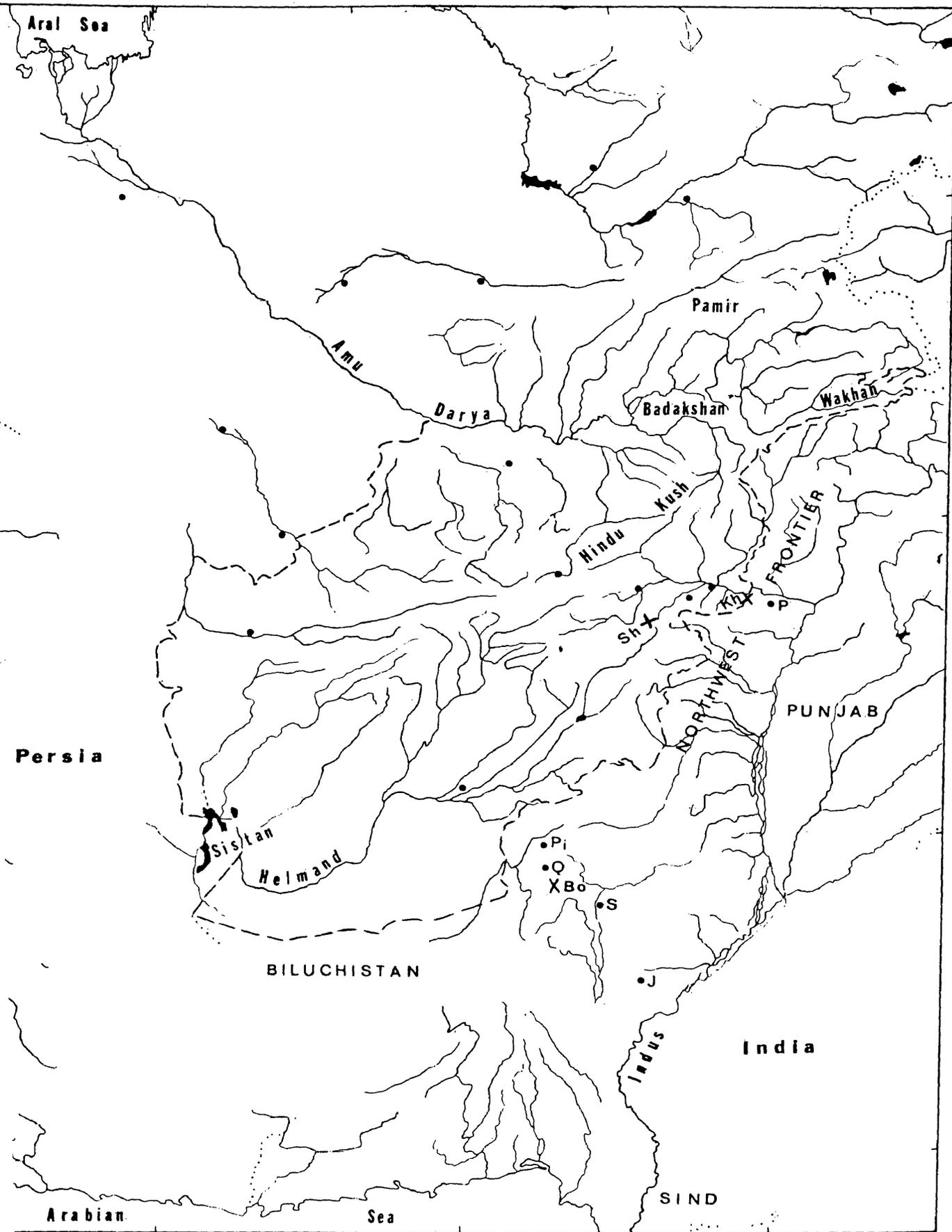


Figure 3.-Russian incursions into Central Asia (adapted from Lyons, 1910; Singhal, 1963; and Dupree 1973; boundaries only approximate). Dates indicate approximate time of establishment of control for area enclosed by long dashed lines.

Bk -- Bokhara

Kh -- Khiva

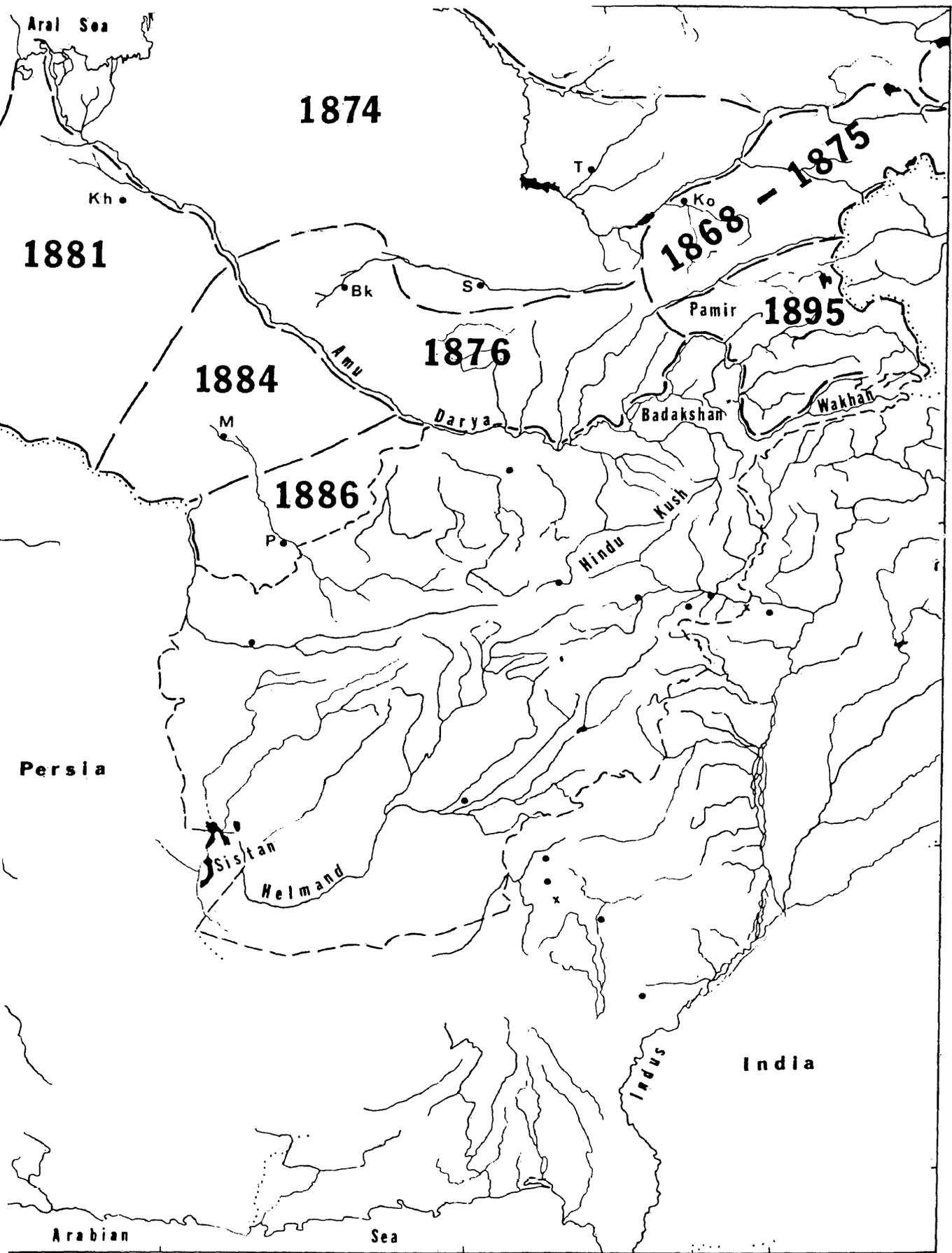
Ko -- Kokand

M - Merv

~ Panjdeh

~ Samarkand

Tashkent



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