

THE ORIGINS OF CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN

Jeffery J. Roberts

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PREFACE

Those searching for the origins of the Soviet war in Afghanistan would do well to begin in December 1955. That month, Afghan Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud signed an economic aid agreement with the U.S.S.R. valued at over 100 million dollars. A subsequent agreement signed the following August promised a wholesale renovation of the Afghan military establishment. The loans enabled Daoud to implement many economic programs, while modernization of the armed forces provided him with the means to enforce a variety of social reforms, notably the abolition of traditional *purdah* (the seclusion of women) and *chadabri* (the wearing of a veil in public). Military assistance, however, also provided the conduit through which the Soviet Union would attempt to impose its will upon Afghanistan. Over time, Soviet training converted several hundred Afghan officers to radical ideologies. These officers played critical roles in both the 1973 coup that overthrew the monarchy and the 1978 revolt that brought the Communist “People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan” (PDPA) to power. Thereafter, several ill-advised reform programs, implemented amidst severe government repression, alienated the majority of the Afghan population and prompted civil war. With the government on the verge of collapse, the Soviet Union sent in troops in December 1979, which remained in Afghanistan for nearly a decade.

Afghanistan suffered tremendously during the war. Casualty estimates generally place the Afghan dead at between 1 and 2 million. The majority of the population became, at one time or another, refugees. Sadly, the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 did not bring peace to the Afghan people. Attempts to form coalition governments from the various *mujahidin* groups failed, and the country degenerated into multifactioned civil war, with rival warlords jostling

for power, disrupting the economy, and terrorizing the population. The Taliban rose amidst the chaos. Initially this militia of religious students attracted support from many Afghans and even some international observers through promises to end the violence, crime, and corruption. This support began to dwindle once their reactionary vision for Afghanistan became evident. In time, their intolerance toward women, dissenting religious views, national minorities, and even such innocuous pastimes as kite flying and bird keeping attracted increased international indignation. Ultimately, their harboring of Al Qaeda terrorists brought down the wrath of an international coalition upon them. Afghans today face a most difficult task in attempting to rebuild amidst the carnage of a quarter century of warfare.

Though the news media often ignored the Soviet-Afghan war, the scholarly community produced several publications, most of which discuss the immediate origins of war, the fighting itself, and the potential consequences. It would be no exaggeration, however, to claim that more Western scholarship on Afghanistan has appeared in the 20-odd years since the outbreak of war than in the 200 years preceding it.

Afghanistan, one of the world's most underdeveloped nations, has attracted relatively few specialized studies. Sitting astride the junction of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, Afghanistan has often been omitted from all three geographic groupings and excluded from area surveys. When included, the nation often has been poorly described, differing as it does from its neighbors in topography, language, economics, cultural traditions, and government.

Great Britain's encounters with Afghanistan are an exception, having always received considerable, if predictably biased, coverage. The only other exception occurred during the twenty-five years immediately prior to the Soviet invasion. General surveys such as Donald Wilber's *Afghanistan* (1962) and Louis Dupree's extensive, identically titled effort (1963) helped introduce Afghan society, history, and culture to the scholarly community. Several specialized studies also appeared. Such works as Varton Gregorian's *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization* (1969), Richard Newell's *The Politics of Afghanistan* (1972), and Ludwig W. Adamiec's *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (1974), to name a few, added considerable depth to the existing scholarship.

During the time in which these works appeared, Afghanistan pursued an official policy of "*bi-tarafi*" (literally "without sides," i.e., nonalignment or neutralism). The extent of Soviet economic and military involvement within the country led some scholars and most popular journalists to consign Afghanistan to the Soviet sphere of influence. While other scholars stressed that the nation was neither communist nor controlled by the U.S.S.R., given the similarities of Afghan policy and that pursued in the nineteenth century, even they remained content to reassert a neutralist heritage.

Most general and specialized studies, however, halted their in-depth anal-

ysis with the overthrow of the modernist king Amanullah (1919–1929). His failed reform programs, fascinating in their goals, implementation, and ultimate failure and readily comparable with more successful efforts in other Islamic states, attracted a disproportionate amount of attention. Few scholars undertook extensive discussion of Amanullah's immediate successors (perhaps for want of sources). Most dismissed the domestic policies of Nadir Shah (king from 1929 to 1933) and Hashim Khan (prime minister from 1933 to 1946) as a return to gradualism and their foreign policy as traditional neutralism. Afghanistan's posture during the final years of British rule in India received virtually no attention, and Afghanistan's role in the postwar world likewise suffered only cursory examination.

This study attempts to rectify these deficiencies in part by examining Afghan relations with the West during the second and third quarters of the twentieth century. In so doing, it offers new insights on the long-term origins of Afghanistan's recent tragedies. The evidence presented herein demonstrates that twentieth-century Afghanistan was neither historically opposed to alliances nor philosophically obsessed with neutralism. It demonstrates that following Amanullah's ouster, the Afghans pursued policies far more complex, and considerably more pro-Western, than previous authors have surmised. Despite the outwardly Islamophile and neutralist rhetoric of his regime, Nadir Shah, no longer fearful of British invasion yet aware of Soviet threats to Afghan independence, championed increased cooperation with British India. Nadir's successors continued his initiative. During the 1930s and early 1940s, in fact, Afghanistan moved closer to the West than ever before. By the end of the Second World War, Afghanistan showed little hesitation in requesting Western economic and military assistance. Despite nineteenth-century setbacks, Britain and Afghanistan seemed headed toward an extensive partnership, with Britain assuming a dominant influence in training and supplying the Afghan military.

The rise of the Indian nationalist movement, however, led to the end of British hegemony in South Asia. Britain, weakened from war and soon divested of both political and military responsibility for the subcontinent, emerged from partition neither capable of nor particularly interested in assisting Afghanistan. The successor states, Pakistan and India, weakened from partition and poised against the other, likewise saw no reason to aid the Kabul regime. India, the legal inheritor of British obligations to Afghanistan, renounced those commitments shortly after independence. Meanwhile, the "Pushtunistan" dispute, whose complex origins are discussed herein in detail, precluded close relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

After the partition, only the United States remained as the potential benefactor of Afghanistan. Throughout the decade 1945–1955, the Afghan leadership and other regional governments courted American assistance. In time, the United States would move to support Pakistan and Iran as part of the worldwide containment effort. Successive administrations proved disinter-

ested in Afghanistan since it possessed no strong conventional military forces, valuable strategic facilities, vital resources, or substantial economic worth yet was dangerously exposed to Soviet encroachment. Over time, the abject failure of American-sponsored development enterprises, aborted diplomatic initiatives, rejections of Afghan requests for arms assistance, and partisan support for Pakistan destroyed Afghan faith in the United States and prompted Daoud to accept the Soviet aid offers.

After those agreements, the United States suddenly took interest in Afghanistan and attempted to offset Soviet influence therein. Though offered alliance membership, Afghanistan had little choice but to support the nonaligned movement after 1956. A neutral stance promised continued aid from both blocs, while a shift of policy toward the West likely would have resulted in termination of Soviet assistance and might well have prompted countermeasures. The window of opportunity had closed.

Had Britain's relationship with Afghanistan been maintained or assumed by another power, Afghanistan could possibly have been spared the horrors of a quarter century of warfare. Such possibilities foundered on a series of misunderstandings and questionable strategic assessments, of which the decision for alliance with Pakistan ranks paramount. Denied access to the Western alliances and their accompanying economic assistance, Daoud faced a choice of continual military impotence, political frustration, and economic stagnation or a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Confident that he could avert the dangers inherent in the latter, he mortgaged Afghanistan's economy to the U.S.S.R. and consigned the Afghan military to Soviet tutelage. Daoud's choice, however, paved the way for the Soviet invasion, with all its inherent consequences.

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND TO AFGHANISTAN, ITS HISTORY, AND PEOPLE

In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a former British officer wrote: “As one who has had considerable personal experience of engaging in military operations against the hillmen of those regions, I know exactly what the Russian army is up against. I firmly believe that the Russians have bitten off a lot more than they can chew. Let them stew in their own juice, and go on wasting a lot of military effort to no purpose.”¹

While his prediction that the war in Afghanistan would become a “Soviet Vietnam” proved correct, most strategic analysts thought that the Afghan *mujahidin* would fade away with the spring thaw. Such pessimism remained prominent even as the war progressed. Continued stalemate seemed palatable to the U.S.S.R. The Soviet government, apparently immune to public opinion, appeared capable of waging a sustained battle of attrition against the Afghans. They had, in fact, conducted similar successful campaigns before, in Central Asia and the Caucasus.² With no threat of popular protests or upcoming elections, the Soviet hierarchy not only could wage a prolonged struggle but could resort to forms of warfare not palatable to a Western democracy. The Soviet Union repeatedly violated Geneva protocols in the early years of the war, using various nerve gases, mustard gas, and other chemical/biological weapons in several provinces. Soviet and Afghan government (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan [DRA]) forces, supported by aircraft and helicopter gunships, directed their attacks against civilians, agricultural areas, water facilities, and livestock as well as the *mujahidin*.³ Despite overwhelming technological superiority and the ability to wage a veritable war of extermination, the Soviet Union proved unable to suppress the *mujahidin* or sway the vast majority of Afghans from support of the

resistance. Left with no hope for victory beyond the mass extermination of the population, the Soviet leadership ultimately determined that the price of retreat would entail less economic and political damage than would continuation of the war.

This recent episode was hardly the first time the Afghans have expelled a foreign invader from their soil. Aside from being a major staging area for assaults on the subcontinent, Afghanistan also lies astride the traditional east-west trade route to and from the Orient. Consequently, Afghanistan "has perhaps seen more invasions in the course of history than any other country in Asia, or indeed the world."⁴ Persians, Scythians, Macedonians and Greeks, Huns, Mongols, Arabs, Turks, and Moguls all attempted to conquer Afghanistan, but none succeeded in permanently subduing the inhabitants. In time, the British supplanted the Moguls as the masters of India, and twice they would attempt to subdue Afghanistan. Despite disciplined armed forces, technological advantages, and expertise in military, government, and economic affairs, they would ultimately fare no better than those before them.⁵

The tenacity and resiliency of the Afghan population have consistently proven critical impediments to invasion. Afghan passion for independence, racial and personal pride, religion, ingrained self-reliance, social structure, legal systems and daily habits, and the geography and climate of their homeland have imparted a rugged individualism to the Afghans that is exceeded in no other people. Mohammed Ali, an Afghan writer, explains: "One of the most dominant characteristics of the Afghan is his intense love of independence. The Afghan patiently bears his misfortune or poverty but he cannot be made to reconcile himself to foreign rule. . . . Foreigners who have failed to understand this point and who have tried to deprive him of his national independence or personal freedom have had to pay heavily for the price of folly."⁶

While the Afghans have always refused to accept foreign rule, rarely have they proven amenable to a strong central government. Most tribes and villages have remained self-sufficient and autonomous, accepting central control only when in their material interest or when faced with overwhelming force. The traditional Loya Jirgah (National Grand Council), comprising influential tribal, religious, and urban leaders, established something of a precedent for unified central authority, but it met only during times of crisis. While local *jirgahs* practiced democracy in the villages, representative government remained an anomaly to most Afghans, who traditionally avoided contact with central government officials, fearing increased taxes, conscription, or other forced labor.⁷

The lack of central authority has rendered Afghanistan an easy state to invade. Indeed, while the Afghans can claim never to have been conquered, neither have they repelled an invader at the border or ousted one without protracted struggle. Afghanistan is perhaps the classic example of Machiavelli's "state of many princes," in that while easily entered, it has proven

impossible to subdue. Whereas the peoples of Afghanistan tend to quarrel among themselves in the absence of external threats, resistance to outside intervention has traditionally spanned across religious, ethnic, and tribal lines. Though resistance has remained locally based, the disunity often has proven an advantage, as the aggressor is afforded no critical target whose destruction will spell the demise of the insurgency.

Afghanistan is not a homogeneous national state but a conglomeration of tribes and ethnic groups. The population of Afghanistan includes the Persian-speaking Tajiks, whose lands in the Oxus Plain are among the most fertile in Afghanistan and hence are vital to the national economy. The Turkic-speaking Uzbeks and Turkomen of the northwest, along with the Tajiks, rank among the most anti-Russian peoples of Afghanistan. The Mongolian-featured Hazaras, who inhabit the barren Central Highlands, remain alone among Afghanistan's major ethnic groups in professing Shi'a Islam. The Nuristanis, formerly known as Kaffirs, remain all but isolated in the mountains of the southeast, and the Baluchis and Brahui inhabit the desolate southwest. Several languages and innumerable dialects are spoken throughout the country.⁸

The predominant ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprising roughly half of the population, are the Pushtuns (at times called Pathans, Pakhtuns, Pash-tuns, or Pakhtoos). Though some tribes live north of the Hindu Kush, the Pushtuns primarily live in the southern regions of the country. The inhabitants of a barren, infertile landscape, crisscrossed with mountains and deserts, many Pushtun tribes habitually raided the lowlands of the Indus Valley into the nineteenth century. They consider themselves "true Afghans" and have tended to regard neighboring peoples, whether within Afghanistan, India, or Persia, as incorrigibly inferior.

Within Afghanistan, the Pushtuns are divided into two main groupings: the Durrani and the Ghilzais. The Durrani long have dominated the political and economic life of modern Afghanistan. Some Pushtuns also inhabit modern-day Pakistan. They include, from northeast to southwest, Mohmands, Yusufzais, Afridis, Orakzais, Wazirs, and Mahsuds. Some of these peoples also inhabit parts of Afghanistan, and nearly all frequently migrate across the border.⁹

Pushtun customs, some of which contradict tenets of Islam, have tended to define Afghan society. They also have given Afghanistan its popular reputation for lawlessness and brutality. Pushtuns live by Pushtunwali, an unwritten system of values that governs resolution of disputes among individuals, families, and tribes. Basically an "eye-for-an-eye" system (or perhaps "two-to-ten eyes for an eye"), Pushtunwali mandates retribution for violations of personal or family *nang* (honor). Retribution can be obtained through seizure of livestock or acceptance of other payment but usually involves inflicting bodily harm upon the offender or next of kin. Securing appropriate *badal* (revenge) is an obligation rather than a choice, with nearest relatives compelled to seek retribution for the slain. (Indeed, stipulations for

badal clouded Anglo-Afghan relations in the nineteenth century and precluded accommodation between the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the *mujahidin*). In a way, Pushtunwali helps prevent crime, as few wish to commit murder for fear of revenge, but too often it perpetuates blood feuds between families that last for generations. Usually sparked by disputes over *zar*, *zan*, and *zamin* (gold, women, and land), such vendettas were often the most vicious among blood relatives. Indeed, the Pushtu word for cousin, *tarbur*, is the root of *tarburgalay*, a term that signifies extreme hatred.¹⁰

There are elements of mercy and kindness in the Pushtunwali. It mandates *melmastia*, requiring hospitality to visitors and guests, even strangers, without regard to personal inconvenience. *Nanawatai* extends that hospitality to include asylum, even to fugitives. Women, children, and members of the *ulama* are among those exempted from retribution. Mercy can also be granted through the intercession of a woman or *mullah* or simply if the intended victim begs forgiveness. The avenger, however, does not have to grant mercy; or necessarily follow any other rules of conduct. As with any feudal system, the effect of the Pushtunwali always has depended on the personality and moods of the individuals wielding the weapons.

The sharp contrast between *melmastia* and *badal* explains the dualism one encounters in reading of the Afghans. One can find Western accounts that describe the Afghans as the world's most outgoing, genuine, courageous, resourceful, and hospitable people and an equal number of others that portray Afghanistan as a land of sadistic brigands who, along with their scheming wives and knife-wielding children, delight in plundering hapless travelers when not abusing one another. Since violent incidents generally have remained more newsworthy than examples of generosity, even if more infrequent, and since the Afghans admittedly can be ingenious practitioners of torture, examples of more regrettable behavior have come to color the popular image of their nation. Yet, while one should not dismiss examples of barbarism, one should also note that invasions rarely leave any people in the mood to grant *melmastia* to the invader.¹¹

As a result of the Pushtunwali, persistent inter- and intratribal feuding, and other socioeconomic factors, most Afghan males become acquainted with weapons in their early childhood and develop a keen sense of marksmanship. Centuries of practice have rendered them superb tacticians, who make excellent use of the rugged landscape. Over the centuries, the Afghans have acquired remarkable mechanical and ballistic aptitude, which allows them to make the best of captured equipment. They have also proven expert arms manufacturers and proficient arms thieves when that option is available to them. Furthermore, the proliferation of weapons across the nation has always allowed the Afghans to raise sizable forces with amazing speed.¹²

Generations of living amidst a hostile physical and social environment have imparted to the Afghans tremendous stamina and capacity for hardship. Their toughness and endurance are perhaps best exemplified in their national sport.

Buzkashi, often played between teams of more than 100, is not so much a team sport as a forum for displays of individual heroics. The players, mounted on horseback, attempt to carry a beheaded calf (young boys play with a goat) through the ranks of opposing horsemen and deposit it in a goal beyond. This dangerous “maelstrom of thundering hooves and flying fists, punctuated by wild yells as the opposing teams fight for possession of the carcass at full gallop,” often produces several injuries and an occasional fatality.¹³

The low standard of living in Afghanistan has also proven an asset. Though possessed of tremendous natural resources, including one of the largest iron ore deposits in the world, transportation costs and government policy always limited development in Afghanistan. Though less than 10 percent of the land is suitable for farming and 40 percent at most can accommodate grazing, most Afghans remain engaged in subsistence agriculture.¹⁴ While this has strengthened individual self-reliance, most Afghans also seem to have little difficulty abandoning their few possessions and once in the field take readily to survival there, subsisting for extended periods with little food and no amenities. On the other hand, invaders cannot live off the land, are susceptible to various diseases, and must import supplies across the limited transportation network, which is vulnerable to guerrilla attack. Afghanistan thus presents invaders with an impossible dilemma. Ali again explains: “Invade it [Afghanistan] with a large force, and you are destroyed by starvation, invade with a small force, you are overwhelmed by a hostile people.”¹⁵

The combination of ballistic familiarity, tactical know-how, rugged endurance, and unyielding refusal to tolerate any sort of foreign rule has made Afghanistan a graveyard of armies. Though successive invaders, each possessed of greater technology than their predecessor, frequently routed Afghan forces in pitched battle, none ever succeeded in breaking the will of the Afghan people to resist. That determination ensured the independence of the Afghan state in the face of British and Soviet invasions and will likely remain Afghanistan’s most valuable deterrent in the future. That resolve, often overlooked or underrated by Western policymakers, should be remembered in any analysis or assessment of Soviet, British, or American policy in the region.

NOTES

1. Brigadier F. Hughes, quoted in Schofield, *Every Rock*, p. 286.
2. Caroe, “Afghanistan: Strategic After-Effects,” p. 131; Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, pp. 162, 165, 183, 210; Malhuret, “Report from Afghanistan,” p. 435; Baddeley, *Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, pp. 129–134.
3. Department of State, Special Report No. 98, “Chemical Warfare in South Asia and Afghanistan,” March 1982, pp. 6, 14–17, 23; Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 323–324; Amstutz, *Afghanistan*, pp. 172–176; Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, pp. 96, 187–188, 205–206; Collins, *Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, pp. 139, 146–148; Giradet, *Afghanistan*, pp. 41, 107–110, 164–165, 214, 233, 237–238;

Arnold, *Afghanistan*, p. 99. Soviet aircraft further dropped concentrations of butterfly mines across the country. These mines carried enough explosive to maim, but not enough to kill, their victims, apparently owing to realization that a wounded *mujahid* or civilian would disrupt resistance supplies and transport more than a dead one. These mines, often shaped to appear as toys or other innocuous items, have maimed thousands of curious or unsuspecting children, adults, and livestock.

In what has become perhaps the most commonly invoked example of atrocities in the Afghan war, on April 20, 1979, at Kerala, DRA forces murdered an estimated 1,170 Afghan males. To the grieving women left behind, a Soviet advisor offered the condolence: that "You can be sure that next year's potato crop will be a good one." It is interesting to note that during the Soviet conflict, resistance leaders expressed longing for the days when their forefathers had fought the "honorable" British. Several human rights groups documented similar executions of entire village populations. Amstutz (*Afghanistan*, pp. 145–146) documents two massacres, one in Ghazni and the other near Qandahar, and claims they are but the tip of the iceberg. .

4. Caroe, *Pathans*, p. 25.

5. Caroe, "Lecture to the Royal Institute of International Affairs," 4 February 1948, MSS.EUR F.203/4 (Olaf Caroe Papers); Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, pp. 120–121; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, p. 20, 44–45.

6. Ali, *Afghanistan*, pp. 122–123; Arnold, *Afghanistan*, p. 2. Arnold, responding to an article that compared Afghanistan to a grain of wheat between two millstones, claimed the Afghans are more like ball bearings. Schofield, *Every Rock*, p. 118.

7. Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations," pp. 114–115; Dupree, *AUFS*, 4/6, p. 4; Dupree, *AUFS*, 9/4, pp. 14–15; Dupree, *AUFS*, 10/4, p. 2; Dupree, "Afghanistan, Problems of a Peasant-Tribal Society," pp. 3, 8; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 166, 170–171, 176–179; Bhaneja, *Afghanistan*, pp. 32–35, 40; Wilber, *Afghanistan*, p. 141; Miller, *Khyber*, p. 100. *Jirgahs* did not vote per se but resolved issues through consensus. Miller claims they "repeated the excess of the Athenian agora, without the erudition of Athens, and with more than one Cleon to act as demagogue."

8. Del Croze, "Afghanistan Today," p. 33; Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 124–125; Dupree, "Afghanistan, Problems of a Peasant-Tribal Society," p. 5; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 80–82, 87–90, 89fn, 196; Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, pp. 9–10, 15; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 34–39, 39fn. The predominant languages are Pashto and Dari, followed by a variety of Turkic dialects.

9. Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination*, pp. 5–6; Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 123–124; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 81, 92; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 30–32. The Durrani are further subdivided into seven subtribes: the Achakzai, Alikozai, Alizai, Barakzai (from whom has descended the Mohammedzai clan, the most recent royal family), Ishakzai, Nurzai, and Popalzai (from whom the Sadozais originate). Ghilzais subtribes include the Ali Khel, Andar, Nassar, Suleiman Khel, Tarakhi, and Tokhi.

10. Poullada, "The Pushtun Role in the Afghan Political System," pp. 7–13; Cunningham, "Tribes of the North West Frontier of India," *World Review* February 1947, MSS.EUR D.670/28 (George Cunningham Papers); Arnold, *Afghanistan*, p. 76; Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 99–100; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, p. 196.

11. Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 111–112. Perhaps one should conclude, as did John Griffiths, that the Afghans "were as likely to rob a rich visitor as they were to be generous to a poor one." Griffiths tells of encounters with villagers who do not hesitate

“to kill their last chicken” and then refuse all offers of recompense. Del Croze, in “Afghanistan Today” (pp. 48–49), describes the Afghans as patient, calm, with a good sense of humor, never angry, friendly, shy, and possessed of strong family values. For other positive portrayals, see Wilber, *Afghanistan*, p. 167; Squire, “Recent Progress in Afghanistan,” p. 6; Squire, “Afghanistan and Her Neighbors,” p. 68; Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 119–123, 145, 271–275; Barton, *India’s North-West Frontier*, pp. 10, 17; MacMunn, “Real British Attitude toward Afghanistan,” p. 469; Rawlinson, “Report on the Dooranee Tribes,” 19 April 1841; Cunningham Papers, “Tribes of the North West Frontier of India,” George Cunningham Papers. Sir Winston Churchill, on the other hand, called the Pathan tribesmen “amongst the most miserable and brutal creatures of the earth. Their intelligence only enables them to be more cruel, more dangerous, more destructive than wild beasts.” He would later add that “every influence, every motive that provokes the spirit of murder among men, implores these mutineers to deeds of treachery and violence. . . . To the ferocity of the Zulu are added the craft of the Redskin and the marksmanship of the Boer. . . . Death by inches and hideous mutilation are the invariable measure meted out to all who fall in battle into the hands of the Pathan tribesman” (quoted in Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 118–119; Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 268–269). Of the more balanced perspectives, Montstuart Elphinstone, one of the first English travelers to Afghanistan, described them as having vices of “revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious and prudent; they are less disposed than the nations in their neighborhood to falsehood, intrigue and deceit” (*Account of the Kingdom of Caubal*, p. 253). The official British attitude changed little from Elphinstone’s assessment over the years. See, e.g., Military Training Pamphlet No. 16, “Platoon Leading in Frontier Warfare” (1945, L/MIL/17/5/2258), which conceded Pathan strengths in “manliness, hospitality, a sturdy sense of independence and a good sense of humor” but also considered the Afghans fanatical, cruel, and treacherous. For an interesting modern contrast, compare the favorable impressions of Jason Elliot in *An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan* with the decidedly less favorable view of Ted Rall in *To Afghanistan and Back*.

12. Fletcher, *Afghanistan*, p. 190; Miller, *Khyber*, p. 101; Arnold, *Afghanistan*, p. 98.

13. Miller, *Khyber*, p. 45; Tabibi, “Aftermath Created by British Policy,” p. 15.

14. Giradet, *Afghanistan*, pp. 152–154, 159–161; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 131–132.

15. Ali, *Afghanistan*, pp. 122–123.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE FIRST ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Great Britain had secured its grip on most of the Indian subcontinent. The British reduced the holdings of their assorted European rivals to a few isolated enclaves and, through outright conquest or forceful diplomacy, attained hegemony over most of the Indian princes. Profits from Indian trade would remain vital to the British economy, at times surpassing all other revenue of the Home government. Consequently, preservation of control in India remained paramount in British strategic planning for nearly 200 years.

The retention of naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean always remained the foremost concern. To this effect, Britain acquired several colonies along the seaward approaches to India. Bases at Aden, Suez, Singapore, and elsewhere helped preserve naval dominance while facilitating trade. Though some such colonies would later acquire some importance of their own, much of their significance remained linked to the protection of India.

With naval dominance ensured, strategic planners could focus on India's land frontiers. To the immediate north, India always seemed well protected by the Himalayas, the world's largest and most formidable mountain chain. To the east, the disease-infested swamps and jungles of Burma offered similar security. No invader ever breached either route until the mid-twentieth century, and even then Chinese and Japanese efforts, respectively, were limited and not entirely successful.

To the west of India lie the wastelands of Baluchistan and the Iranian plateau. The terrain and climate of these lands, believed by their few inhabitants to have been the place where God discarded the refuse of civilization, have made invasion difficult, though not impossible. From Alexander the

Great to the Saffavids, certain hardy conquerors crossed the badlands with their forces intact. Throughout the period of British hegemony, however, no similar invaders appeared.

The most commonly chosen avenue for invasion of India ran from the northwest, through modern-day Afghanistan. This route was not without major challenges. The Hindu Kush Mountains bisect the region. The few passes are difficult to negotiate, and they afford ideal ambush positions for the local inhabitants. Still, the northwest offered a practicable landward approach to the subcontinent. Given that nearly every successful invasion of India had come from that direction, British strategic planners would pay great attention to the Northwest Frontier, and to Afghanistan, throughout the duration of the Empire.

Though certain enlightened individuals espoused the idea of an Afghan state as early as the sixteenth century, as a political entity, Afghanistan dates from the reign of Ahmed Shah Durrani (1747–1773). An Abdali Pushtun, Ahmed Shah had commanded an elite cavalry contingent under Saffavid usurper Nadir Shah, which spearheaded the rout of the Moguls at Panipat and the infamous sack of Delhi in 1739. After Nadir's assassination in 1747, Ahmed assumed power in the Pushtun areas near Qandahar. He adopted the name "Dur-i-Durran" (Pearl-of-Pearls) and applied the name "Durrani" to the tribes of southwest Afghanistan as a measure of political unity. Over the next twenty years, he carved out a domain that eventually stretched from the Indus to the Oxus, from Kashmir to Khurastan. Ahmed Shah would leave a legacy that subsequent Afghan monarchs would try to emulate.

Ahmed Shah secured political authority through force of personality and reinforced it through a series of successful looting expeditions into north India. In 1761 he defeated the Maratha confederacy, also at Panipat. (In crippling Maratha power, he unintentionally facilitated the British conquest of the Indian interior.) Ahmed Shah shrewdly allocated captured booty and land grants to the Durrani chiefs, securing their acquiescence to his policies. In return, they continued to provide him military support.

Ahmed Shah established no permanent political system. The Durrani Empire remained more a tribal confederation buoyed by conquest than a modern nation-state. Lacking both an urban economic base and a royal army, Ahmed Shah could never force his rule on the tribes. His successors likewise would remain subject to their consent.¹

Like other states that depended heavily on the personal magnetism of their leaders, the Durrani empire collapsed within a few decades of its founder's death. Ahmed Shah's son and successor, Timur Shah, quickly lost authority in outlying regions, and when his twenty-three sons battled upon their father's death in 1793, the empire disintegrated. Politics degenerated into a three-way battle between the rulers of Herat, Qandahar, and Kabul, with each city remaining hostile to the other two. Afghanistan experienced an "orgy of intrigue, treachery, torture and murder" wherein various pretenders at-

tempted to unseat rivals through palace intrigues and military action in an “ever-shifting kaleidoscope of betrayal.”² Afghanistan’s cities lost between one-third and four-fifths of their populations over a fifty-year period.³

By the turn of the century, Timur’s fifth son, Zaman Shah, had consolidated a small power base in southern Afghanistan, from which he attempted to restore his grandfather’s empire. His threat to the surrounding states, former vassals to Ahmad Shah, caused many to court British assistance. Britain, fearful of incursions and desirous of expanded economic contacts, moved to support several local princes. Though Zaman Shah’s usurpation eventually removed the threat, the British continued to extend their contacts and power in the northwest.

Afghanistan’s period of misfortune coincided with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. Napoleon’s campaign in Egypt had aroused British fears of an invasion of India. Then in 1801, the erratic Tsar Paul had ordered the Don Cossacks to march to the Indus, but they turned back when news of the tsar’s assassination reached them at the Volga. The Treaty of Tilsit (1807) renewed British fears of direct Franco-Russian aggression. Though the hypothetical invading forces would have had to cross over 2,000 miles of hostile country just to get to India, British authorities thought enough of the threat to sign defensive alliances with the Persians and Sikhs. They also dispatched an emissary, Montstuart Elphinstone, to Peshawar to meet with the ruler of Kabul, Shah Shuja. Though the two men signed a treaty of “eternal friendship,” Shuja’s near-immediate usurpation (carried out by his brother) rendered the alliance meaningless. Thereafter, the British courted Afghanistan’s seemingly more reliable neighbors. They maintained close ties with Ranjit Singh, whose disciplined Sikh army, modeled on Western lines, possessed of modern artillery and commanded by European officers, had earned their respect. The British also signed a comprehensive alliance with Persia in 1814, which stipulated mutual assistance against a Russian or Afghan attack.⁴

Continued Afghan instability presented its neighbors with opportunities for aggrandizement. Throughout the ensuing half century, Persia would often attempt to offset losses to Russia through expansion to the east. Ranjit Singh, meanwhile, captured the Afghan winter capital of Peshawar in 1823 and later added Baluchistan to his dominions. The losses of the Peshawar Valley, one of the richest tracts in all Pushtun territory, and of Afghanistan’s outlet to the sea were political, economic, and psychological blows that subsequent Afghan rulers would attempt to reverse.⁵

In the late 1820s, Russia waged successful wars against the Persians and the Ottoman Empire. The treaties of Turkmanchai (1828) and Adriandople (1829) secured respective Russian gains. The Russian advance, however, seemed to many London politicians to threaten British economic and strategic interests. They grew fearful of Russian consolidation along the Hindu Kush, from which Russia could dominate Central Asian trade, threaten in-

vasion, and foster rebellion in India. Tories and Whigs alike were already concerned with Russia when, in 1829, Colonel de Lacy Evans followed his *Designs of Russia* with publication of *Probability of an Invasion of British India*. Evans forewarned of Russian forces marching from the Caspian to Khiva, sailing down the Oxus, and resuming the march to India. Though such notions defied logistical reason, Evans's well-received works convinced more British officials of the necessity to take action to forestall Russian expansion.⁶

During Persia's war with Russia, however, Britain had not honored previous treaty commitments. Persia subsequently became a client of St. Petersburg. In 1837 the Russians encouraged Mohammed Shah Qajar to seize Herat, which his army invaded in November. Lord Palmerston, then the Home secretary, believed that Russo-Persian control of Herat would constitute a grave threat to regional security. He gave the governor-general of India, Lord Auckland, permission to take "measures that may appear to you desirable in order to contract [the] Russian advances." Palmerston left much to Auckland's discretion, allowing him the prerogative to "interfere decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistan."⁷

In the meantime, Afghanistan's internal dilemma had begun to abate after Dost Mohammed's accession in 1826. He consolidated a power base around Kabul and established a limited bureaucracy staffed by his sons and matrimonial allies, which reduced crime and corruption to manageable proportions. With a modicum of stability restored in eastern Afghanistan, he attempted to wrestle Peshawar from the Sikhs. In 1837 Dost's son, Akbar Khan, led an Afghan army to victory at Jamrud. Akbar, however, did not follow up his success with an advance to Peshawar, and the city remained in Sikh hands.⁸

Dost Mohammed held no animosity toward the British and, in fact, had expressed to Auckland a willingness to cooperate against the Russians and Persians, given a satisfactory settlement of Afghan disputes with the Sikhs. Dost's placating attitude earned him a visit from a British envoy, Sir Alexander Burnes. Like many other Britons, Burnes realized that Peshawar and its unruly environs had become a liability to the Sikhs and believed a restoration to Afghan control would bring stability to the frontier. While forceful diplomacy perhaps could have achieved a compromise, Burnes was officially on a commercial mission and was not empowered to negotiate a settlement. Nor would such prerogatives be forthcoming.⁹

Dost continually demonstrated amity for the British. Notably, he turned over to Burnes the private correspondence of the Russian envoy, Lieutenant Vitkevitch. Burnes duly noted the amir's conciliatory attitude and his rejection of numerous Russo-Persian overtures and repeatedly stressed potential benefits of an Afghan alliance in notes to Auckland. In one instance, he wrote the viceroy: "It remains to be considered why we cannot act with Dost Mohammed. He is a man of undoubted ability, who has at his heart a high

opinion of the British nation. . . . [He] prefers the sympathy and friendly offices of the British.”¹⁰ Yet Anglo-Afghan relations could never reach fruition owing to Dost’s quarrels with the Sikhs. Auckland remained unwilling to risk offending Ranjit Singh, whose European-modeled state, a British ally since 1806, seemed a more reliable partner, events at Jamrud notwithstanding. To Auckland, Dost’s state seemed as weak and unreliable as those of his Qandahari or Herati rivals. Auckland thought Dost would be lucky, and should be content, to maintain sovereignty over his limited dominions. Auckland also believed that the continued division of Afghanistan was in the British interest, fearing attacks on India were Dost to unify it. Though Dost proved willing to accept nearly every demand Auckland could make, including the severance of relations with Persia and Russia, he could never countenance Ranjit’s continued control of Peshawar, not only out of economic necessity and moral principle but also for fear of loss of face among the Pushtuns. Auckland’s continued support for a Sikh presence in Peshawar eventually prompted Dost to cease his cold treatment of Vitkevitch and enter negotiations with the Russian in April 1838. The British reacted by supporting the Sikhs in a joint effort to replace the “unreliable” Dost with Shah Shuja.¹¹

Auckland’s decision was as much a product of the British attitude of the time as a logical choice between potential allies. A series of seemingly uninterrupted victories had given the early Victorians a sense of destiny that translated into overconfidence. Having never been more than temporarily checked by Asian armies, the British expected little trouble from the “barbarous” Afghans. Members of the civil service and military relished a chance to acquire laurels in Afghanistan; indeed, both army and East India Company regiments had to draw lots to see which would have the privilege to invade. The British, however, knew little of Afghanistan or its people. The only accounts available to them were the sketchy travelogues of assorted Central Asian explorers and traders. Burnes apparently learned little, as he assured Auckland that a token escort could ensure the establishment of a client regime. Virtually every official close to the crisis echoed this belief that Shuja could be restored without difficulty.¹²

The Simla Manifesto of October 1838 severed relations with Dost, berated him for collaborating with the Russian envoy and the Persians, and condemned his hostile intentions toward the Sikhs, the “ancient ally” of Britain. Curiously, the Persian siege of Herat had been lifted before the manifesto was written. The city had seemed on the verge of collapse until British Lieutenant Eldred Pottinger arrived and helped bolster the defenses. The poor performance of the Persian army, threats of direct British intervention, and an absence of tangible support from Russia forced the Shah to retreat in the late summer of 1838.¹³

The British nonetheless followed through on their plans to invade Afghanistan. Since Herat was hardly secure and Qandahar had recently allied with the Persians, the invasion still aimed at preventing Persian and/or Russian

incursions into Afghanistan. In addition, Auckland faced crises elsewhere and hoped a strong show of force would lessen the threat of war with Nepal, reduce internal unrest across India, and perhaps have a sobering effect on Russia. Auckland's policy enjoyed the near-unanimous support of the Home government.¹⁴

In December 1838, the "Army of the Indus" went forward in what promised to be a brief, glorious campaign. The main force marched to Kabul via the Bolan Pass, a route four times longer than that through the Khyber but one that took it through Sind, where the British imposed further concessions upon the amir's already limited sovereignty. Along the march, the army suffered more from disease and the elements than from hostile action. As the army approached Qandahar, that city's rulers either fled or submitted to Shuja. After resuming the march to Kabul, a strong Afghan force in the fortress at Ghazni temporarily stalled the British advance, until a traitorous nephew of Dost helped the attackers breach an undefended gate in a daring night attack. Dost, who had expected a lengthy siege, fled to the north. On August 7, 1839, the Army of the Indus entered Kabul.¹⁵

From the beginning of the occupation, the Kabulis regarded the occupying forces with undisguised contempt. Shuja, viewed as a *watan ferosh* (literally "country seller," or traitor) from his arrival, attracted little support. His corrupt ministry only aggravated staggering inflation that had accompanied the invasion. Attempts to establish royal forces met with widespread desertion, and Shuja's army remained ill-disciplined rabble. This forced Auckland to retain a sizable British force in Kabul, despite the expenses. That force could also keep watch on Persia and the Russians, who then had an army advancing on Khiva.¹⁶

All the while, the British settled into occupation duties, brought forward their wives and children, and generally pursued their own way of life regardless of the circumstances. Their activities often constituted affronts to Islam and to Afghan society. While Kabul had acquired a debaucherous reputation prior to Dost's accession, Dost had later imposed strict laws against alcoholic beverages, intoxicating drugs, gambling, and prostitution. Now Burnes led the British contingent in various unsavory practices, availing himself of the "open, undisguised and notorious" traffic in Afghan women. Such behavior fostered greater resentment toward Shuja and his British supporters and prompted increased guerrilla attacks against them.¹⁷

Though attacks on the occupation force increased, British confidence remained high, bolstered by the surrender of the amir. Dost retreated into the Hindu Kush, where for more than a year he had raised armies as rapidly as the British dispersed them. Frustrated by his failures, he surrendered in the autumn of 1840. All his sons, save Akbar, followed him to exile in India. Though scattered uprisings continued to occur afterward, British-Indian forces responded with successful punitive expeditions, in which they often routed ten times their number of Afghans. With Herat secure, Sind and Qan-

dahar subdued, and the Russians now retreating from Khiva, by mid-1841, Auckland's policy seemed a success. Buoyed by the positive overtones of messages from Kabul, Auckland turned his attentions to developments in China and the Middle East, leaving affairs in Kabul in the hands of the chief political officer, William MacNaughton.¹⁸

In this atmosphere of confidence, MacNaughton strove to lessen expenses. Throughout the occupation, the British had provided subsidies to the Ghilzais in return for noninterference with supply deliveries. MacNaughton terminated this arrangement, shortly after he transferred one of the garrison's two combat brigades to India. Within a few days, thousands of angry Ghilzais had "mobilized," isolating Kabul in the process. MacNaughton's move was among the most damning errors that ultimately led to the destruction of the Kabul garrison.

The besieged British faced several tactical disadvantages, most of which were their own fault. Initially they had occupied the Bala Hissar, Kabul's imperial fortress, but they abandoned it to Shuja and his harem and moved to a cantonment on the city's outskirts. One contemporary writer claimed the new position "must ever be spoken of as a disgrace to our military skill and judgment." The rough surrounding terrain, dotted with stone houses, provided the Afghans with avenues of approach, while occupation of hills to the north allowed them to pour fire from their *jezails* (which were, incidentally, superior to the British "Brown Bess" muskets) on the British positions with relative immunity. Most incredibly, the British left both the commissariat and the magazine one quarter mile beyond the walls of the cantonment. The early loss of the garrison's supplies ensured its eventual destruction.¹⁹

General William George Elphinstone, a veteran of Waterloo, was in command of the British forces. The elderly, gout-ridden general was so physically weak that he could scarcely mount his horse without assistance. Contemporaries labeled him "fit only for the invalid establishment on the day of his arrival." His infirmity rendered him useless in the crisis. He left tactical execution to Brigadier John Shelton. Another brave Napoleonic war veteran, his courage could not offset his tactical mistakes. In one particular counterattack, he formed his infantry in two squares, making them easy marks for Afghan snipers, and deployed his cavalry in the middle. When one square broke, horses and men became intertwined in complete disarray as all raced back to the cantonment. Though Shelton would prove more efficient on later occasions, neither he nor Elphinstone provided inspiration to the increasingly dispirited troops, as both commanders made no secret of their lack of faith in a successful outcome of the siege.²⁰

Two events further weakened the British position. The onset of winter aggravated supply problems, while the arrival of Akbar brought reinforcements and determined leadership to the Afghan cause. The ever-optimistic MacNaughton attempted to negotiate with Akbar, offering to withdraw all British troops from Kabul if the Afghans would guarantee their safe conduct.

Shuja would be abandoned and Dost allowed to return. Akbar consented but later offered MacNaughton another deal, which promised a retained British presence in Kabul. MacNaughton, still hoping to rescue the situation, accepted the new offer. Akbar, in front of many influential chiefs, accused the political officer of treachery and shot him.²¹

With his forces facing imminent starvation, Elphinstone accepted Akbar's initial terms, which promised safe, unfettered passage to the border and adequate supplies of food. The army turned over its heavy weapons and began a retreat to Jalalabad on January 6, 1842. The troops and camp followers marched into an inverted hell of cold. Throughout the next week, many would die of exposure. Despite Akbar's promises, others fell to the bullets of Ghilzai tribesmen, who attacked the column all along the route. Initially content to finish off the wounded and ambush stragglers, the magnitude and daring of their attacks gradually increased. Within a week, 4,500 soldiers, along with over 12,000 camp followers, perished on the Kabul-Jalalabad road. Aside from a few officers, women, and children held personally by Akbar and the army's surgeon, who managed to reach Jalalabad, the Ghilzais annihilated the entire British contingent. The invasion of Afghanistan, soon dubbed "Auckland's Folly," had culminated in the worst disaster suffered by British armies in Asia until the fall of Singapore 100 years later.²²

Though the invasion left a legacy of hatred, otherwise it proved but a minor setback that had few lasting consequences on British policy. In the fall of 1841, the Whigs had regained control of the Home government, which led Auckland to resign. Lord Ellenborough was named as replacement. Though determined to retreat from the forward positions, Ellenborough sanctioned further operations in Afghanistan to rescue besieged garrisons, restore army morale and reputation, and avenge the perceived treachery. Major General George Pollack's "Army of Retribution" forced the Khyber Pass to relieve the Jalalabad garrison, while another force under Major General James Knott rescued a brigade in Qandahar. Pollock's forces pushed on to Kabul, recovered Akbar's prisoners, and then burned the Kabul bazaar before departing in October 1842. British forces later pilfered artifacts from the revered tomb of Mahmud of Ghazni and leveled that city, where a small British garrison had also been annihilated. Both relief forces destroyed villages and the surrounding countryside, with notable examples occurring at Istalif and Charikar, where they executed some inhabitants.²³

Though the Tripartite Pact was abandoned and Dost allowed to return to Kabul, British prestige suffered little. Politicians and military authorities wrote off the defeat, as did the Duke of Wellington, as attributable to the "grossest treachery and the most inconceivable imbecility." While other factors such as the weather, terrain, Afghan tenacity, and the mistaken belief that Shuja would command considerable support had also contributed to the disaster, since British forces always routed *lashkars* before, and soon did so again, the defeat would, indeed, seem an anomaly. The mutual bitterness that

remained, however, would poison Anglo-Afghan relations and color the image of Afghanistan in other parts of the world well into the next century.²⁴

The British emerged from the war with little but contempt for the Afghans. Throughout the next century, historians, poets, and novelists alike persistently attributed the British failure to flaws in Afghan character. Though a few Britons lauded Afghan military prowess, others found guerrilla tactics less than manly and derided the Afghans for not following European battlefield etiquette. Most decried the Afghans as sadists, who delighted in practicing hideous tortures upon their innocent victims. Many writers accentuated the stripping and mutilation of the dead, acts that seem to have repulsed the British more than the actual killings. The most commonly invoked derisive trait was sheer treachery. Many berated Akbar, who in their minds had not only been responsible for the murders of Burnes and MacNaughton but also agreed to the retreat, only to unleash the Ghilzais upon the column.²⁵

The hardships imposed by the invasion and the atrocities committed by the "Army of Retribution" left the Afghans with similar animosities toward the British that would together preclude harmonious Anglo-Afghan relations. This resentment would increase when the British annexed the Sikh dominions in 1848. The Sikh state had become unstable following the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839. The British soon engineered its demise. The British commander, General Hugh Gough, proved the chief obstacle to success. Another Napoleonic retread, this "antique warhorse . . . thought of artillery as unsupporting, effete, tactically useless and otherwise a liability." His well-disciplined infantry carried him through First Sikh War in 1845, but heavy casualties left the army near the breaking point. Though the British attempted to support a rump state, war soon began anew. In an ironic role reversal, the Sikhs bargained with Dost, promising him Peshawar and the surrounding area in return for Afghan support. Gough's tactics continued to produce near-Pyrrhic victories, notably at Chillianwala, but finally, with his replacement imminent, Gough brought forward the despised artillery and routed a combined Sikh/Afghan force at Gujerat. The Afghans fell back ignominiously on Kabul. The British soon annexed the whole of the Sikh dominions, including Baluchistan and Pushtun-occupied areas claimed by Afghanistan. Their continued presence in these areas would lead to decades of conflict with the tribal inhabitants and the Afghans who supported them.²⁶

NOTES

1. Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 26–29; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 43–49.

2. Miller, *Khyber*, pp. xiv, 11–12. Afghanistan's internal difficulties are perhaps best demonstrated by the fate of Futeh Khan, elder brother of the future Amir Dost Mohammed. Though a loyal commander of the ruler of Herat, Futeh was punished for one of his brother's adulteries, by being "first blinded, then scalped, then had the skin

pared from his body as if from an apple, and then had his limbs amputated, after which he was allowed to expire.”

3. For details of the economic decline during this period, see Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 50–58; see also Newell, *Politics of Afghanistan*, p. 117; MacMunn, “Real British Attitude toward Afghanistan,” pp. 472–473.

4. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 7–11, 15–17; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 92–97; Tabibi, “Aftermath Created by British Policy,” pp. 41–42.

5. Ali, *Afghanistan*, p. 8; Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 14–15; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 73, 79–80, 127; Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*, pp. 306–307.

6. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 22–30, 40–42, 74–76.

7. Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 19–21; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 95–99, 99fn, 102fn; Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 79–83. Palmerston’s policy had detractors. They discounted the immediate importance of Herat or thought Russia too backward to be an immediate threat.

8. Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 13, 16; Ali, *Afghanistan*, p. 14; Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 109, 114. Some sources claim Akbar retreated owing to an ammunition shortage, others assert he advanced to the city but was repulsed, while still more maintain that his advisors persuaded him not to advance. Norris claims the battle was simply more of a draw than an Afghan victory.

9. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 56–57, 70–71, 119–124; Ali, *Afghanistan*, pp. 15–17. Burnes had met Dost in 1832, had been favorably impressed, and had argued for closer relations even then.

10. Quoted in Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 26–28.

11. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 91–92, 106–109, 114–115, 120–121, 131–134, 145–149; Barton, *India’s North-West Frontier*, pp. 125–127; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 98–101, 100fn. Dost’s position on Peshawar and British demands upon him make for interesting comparisons with American efforts to obtain a Pushtunistan settlement. See chapters 8, 12, and 13.

12. Ali, *Afghanistan*, pp. 2, 21, 37; Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 61–63, 184–186, 192–193. It was to Auckland’s credit that he sent a more sizable force than recommended.

13. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 162–163, 179–180, 214–216; Griffiths, *Afghanistan*, pp. 31, 31fn; Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 19–20, 33–34.

14. Though he cites a few objections (p. 228, e.g.), Norris demonstrates that there was a consensus among British officials in support of Auckland’s policy (*First Afghan War*, pp. 117–118, 165–168, 176–178, 190–191, 200–201, 211, 218, 248).

15. Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 70–71; Ali, *Afghanistan*, pp. 31–32; Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 251–252, 286–290.

16. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 249, 254, 260, 271–273, 284, 297, 312. Mass desertions among Shuja’s forces make for an interesting comparison with subsequent People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan efforts to establish an effective military.

17. Kaye, *History of the War*, pp. 548–549; Schofield, *Every Rock*, pp. 72–73; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, pp. 119–122.

18. Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 332–336, 353–354, 361–362.

19. Miller, *Khyber*, pp. 46–47, 59; Norris, *First Afghan War*, pp. 365–369.

20. Kaye, *History of the War*, pp. 218–227. Kaye claims: “It was a mockery to talk of his [Elphinstone’s] commanding . . . in the quietest district of Hindostan.” Norris,