



# ANGLO-AFGHAN TREATY OF 1905

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**ANGLO-AFGHAN TREATY OF 1905**, an agreement pertaining to British control of Afghan foreign policy and related matters. When ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān died in October, 1901, his son and successor Ḥabīballāh Khan inherited a special relationship with the government of India, founded on letters exchanged in June and July, 1880, between ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān and Sir Lepel Griffin, then chief British political officer in Afghanistan. These established British control of the amir’s foreign relations, gave him the promise of British protection against unprovoked aggression, and recognized him as the amir of Kabul. Britain was to refrain from intervention in his country’s internal affairs, and the amir was to receive a regular subsidy, which was increased in 1893 (for the texts see L. W. Adamec, *Afghanistan 1900-1923: A Diplomatic History*, Berkeley, 1967, pp. 172-75).

Ḥabīballāh was well aware that the agreement between his father and the British had been personal; he wanted the relationship to continue, but on a more formal basis, between states rather than persons. The British preferred to keep the arrangements renewable with each change of ruler, but sought to strengthen those parts that deferred Afghanistan from treating with Russia. Louis Dane, foreign secretary to the government of India, arrived in Kabul on 12 December 1904 with instructions to amend the old terms and negotiate a binding personal treaty with the amir. After three months of negotiations (details in Adamec, *Afghanistan*, pp. 49-64) Dane was authorized to accept



Ḥabīballāh's terms, which reaffirmed the old agreements but turned them into a treaty between nations. The subsidies granted to his late father were renewed, and the amir was enabled to collect arrears. He was also allowed to import arms without restrictions, after Viscount Curzon, the Viceroy of India, had previously held up a consignment. Since he was recognized not as amir of Kabul, nor even as amir of Afghanistan, but as the independent king of Afghanistan and its dependencies, his country's territorial integrity was implicitly guaranteed. In return, he allowed Britain to retain control over his foreign relations (V. Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, Stanford, 1969, pp. 207-08; Adamec, *Afghanistan*, pp. 59-64, 178). Curzon was bitterly disappointed (L. J. Lumley Dundas, Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, London, 1928, II, p. 367), but his Conservative masters in London were pleased to avoid the risk of new forward entanglements, and the Liberal administration that followed in December, 1905 found the agreement even more to its taste (John Viscount Morley, *Recollections*, New York, 1917, II, pp. 157-58).

An accident of timing had given Ḥabīballāh the agreement he wanted when it was most likely to be ideologically acceptable in London. When Ḥabīballāh paid a long and successful visit to India in 1907, he was greeted in a style befitting a king; before he went home to Kabul he received a telegram from King Edward VII in which he was addressed as His Majesty (P. Sykes, *History of Afghanistan* II, London, 1940, p. 226; Morley, *Recollections* II, p. 199; D. P. Singhal, *India and Afghanistan, 1876-1907*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1963, p. 173; Adamec, *Afghanistan*, p. 66). This was something that the tough and implacable 'Abd-al-Raḥmān had never achieved. But 'Abd-al-Raḥmān died in his bed, and twelve years after the visit to India, Ḥabīballāh was assassinated. Whether this was the result of a tribal grudge or a family intrigue is uncertain, but the suspicion must remain that his friendship with the British in India offended less tolerant Afghans.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Given in the text.