



# ANGLO-AFGHAN TREATY OF 1921

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**ANGLO-AFGHAN TREATY OF 1921**, the outcome of peace negotiations following the Third Anglo-Afghan War. After the cease-fire of 3 June 1919, negotiations were begun at Rawalpindi between an Afghan mission headed by 'Alī-Aḥmad Khan, commissary for home affairs, and the British delegation headed by Sir A. H. Grant, foreign secretary to the government of India. In the resulting Treaty of Rawalpindi, concluded on 11 Du'l-qa'da 1337 Š./8 August 1919, Afghanistan ceded the privilege of importing arms and ammunition through India; the British subsidy was discontinued, and funds granted in appreciation of Afghanistan's neutrality during World War I were confiscated. The Afghan frontier was to be demarcated west of the Khyber, and a treaty of friendship was to be concluded six months after the Afghan government had shown itself "sincerely anxious to regain the friendship of the British Government." But the key point appeared in a letter attached to the treaty, where Grant acknowledged Afghanistan's independence, stating that ". . . the said Treaty and this letter leave Afghanistan officially free and independent in its internal and external affairs" (text in L. W. Adamec, *Afghanistan, 1900-1923: A Diplomatic History*, Berkley, 1967, pp. 182-83). When negotiations were resumed in April, 1920, at Mussoorie, Sir Henry Dobbs, India's foreign secretary, and Maḥmūd Khan Ṭarzī, the Afghan foreign minister, sought to conclude an "exclusive" or "neighbourly" treaty. Britain was willing to recognize Afghani independence but hoped to limit Soviet influence, and Afghanistan was willing to conclude an alliance with Britain if support could



be obtained for the liberation of Bokhara and Khiva from Soviet control. But Britain was not yet reconciled to granting Afghanistan its independence, nor were the Afghans contritely suing for friendship, and after three months of unsuccessful discussions, the two parties were unable to come to an agreement.

Negotiations were resumed in Kabul on 10 January 1921; foreign secretary Dobbs later recapitulated them in four stages. During the first stage (20 January to 9 April 1921), the Afghan government demanded territorial concessions based on the Afghans' right of self-determination in the Northwest Frontier Province of India. They also demanded payment of the "4 crore and 36 lakhs" of rupees owed by India in exchange for Afghan neutrality during World War I, and they insisted on a revision of the Turkish peace treaty. The British were willing to provide most of the funds but insisted on the exclusion of Soviet consular offices from southeastern Afghanistan. During the next stage (9 April to mid July), Afghanistan demanded an offensive-defensive alliance with Britain in exchange for the exclusion of Soviet consular offices from southeastern Afghanistan; at the same time, the Afghan government ratified its treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union (20 April). During the third stage (mid-July to 18 September 1921), the London government protested the conclusion of a treaty of friendship between Italy and Afghanistan (3 June) and indicated that Britain was about to conclude an agreement with Afghanistan which would "admit the superiority and predominate political influence of Britain." At this point, the Afghans began to doubt British sincerity, and they were further antagonized when Lord Curzon, secretary of state for foreign affairs, rebuffed the Afghan mission to Europe, stating that the negotiations in Kabul were the affairs of Afghanistan and India. During the last stage (18 September to 8 December 1921), the British mission twice made preparations to leave Afghanistan, but both parties finally reached an agreement (30 'Aqrab 1300 Š./22 November 1921). There was no formal treaty of friendship, since outstanding issues could not be resolved, but the treaty did acknowledge Afghanistan's independence, accept the boundary delimitations agreed upon at Rawalpindi, establish commercial relations and postal arrangements, and provide for the exchange of information prior to military operations among the frontier tribes (text in Adamec, *Afghanistan*, pp. 183-88).

The Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921 was not entirely satisfactory to either Britain or Afghanistan and was considered to be a temporary arrangement; it was to remain in force for at least three years and then until one year after



cancellation by either of the contracting parties. For lack of an alternative, the treaty remained in force until India gained its independence in 1947.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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