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ANGLO-AFGHAN WARS
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i. First Anglo-Afghan War (1838-42)

This war was fought between a British Indian army in alliance with the still-independent Sikhs under Ranjit Singh, and the Bārakzay rulers of Kabul and Qandahār. Its object was to depose Dōst Moḥammad Khan, the Bārakzay amir of Kabul and to restore the former Sadōzay ruler, Shah Šoǰāʿ; Dōst Moḥammad had been dealing with Persia and Russia, while it was thought that Shah Šoǰāʿ could be trusted to have nothing to do with them. Long before 1838 the British in India had been alarmed by the Russian advance into Central Asia and by the interest of the czar's agents in Persia and Afghanistan. At stake was the market for Russian or British products in Central Asia. British imperialists dreamed of sending goods in steam boats up the Indus and overland into Central Asia. Russian imperialists aspired to gain possession of Ḵīva in the belief that it would become the center of all the commerce of Asia and would undermine the commercial superiority of those who dominated the sea ([N.] N. Mouraviev, *Voyage en Turcomanie et à Ḵīva, fait en1819 et 1820*, tr. M. G.

Lecointe de Laveau, Paris, 1823, p. 345).

From 1829 onward the British considered it a matter of urgent national importance to extend their influence into Central Asia before the Russians arrived (J. A. Norris, *The First Afghan War 1838-1842*, Cambridge, 1967. ch. 2). They also feared that their hold on India would be jeopardized if Russia were dominant in Central Asia and militarily present in or near Afghanistan. To protect their interests, they sent an envoy, Alexander Burnes, by way of Sind to Lahore in 1830 and by way of Kabul to Bokhara in 1831-32 (for which he became famous as an explorer and political agent and earned the nickname "Bokhara Burnes;" see A. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara, Containing the Narrativeof a Voyage on the Indus*, London, 1834). At this time the strong Russian influence in Persia was being used to encourage a Persian campaign against the strategically important fortress of Herat, which was ruled by a Sadōzay (see Afghanistan x). The British sought to save Herat from Persia and thus to hold the Russians at bay in the west.

Meanwhile the only Indian state of any significant independence and military power was the Panjab under Ranjit Singh. The British could not hope to establish a

strong influence beyond the Indus unless they first either conciliated or conquered the Sikhs. The spectacle of the well-trained and equipped armies of Lahore persuaded the British to make friendship with the Sikhs a high priority. It was impossible for the British to befriend Ranjit Singh and Dōst Moḥammad Khan at the same time, for there was a fierce quarrel between them over the Sikh occupation of Peshawar and the shelter and encouragement given to Shah Šoǰāʿ. Even Burnes, on a mission to Kabul, was unable to reconcile Dōst Moḥammad with Ranjit Singh. Burnes' masters could not offer Dōst Moḥammad anything that he really wanted in return for giving up correspondence with Persia and Russia.

In 1838 the governor general, Lord Auckland, signed the Simla Manifesto, which was in effect a declaration of war upon the Bārakzay rulers of Kabul and Qandahār and of intent to restore Shah Šoǰāʿ while saving Herat from Persian designs. The Sikhs played a minimal part in subsequent military operations. The Army of the Indus, as the British called it, entered Afghanistan in the spring of 1839 and made its way through Qandahār and Ḡaznī to Kabul. Shah Šoǰāʿ was restored but not warmly welcomed, and the Bārakzī and their followers fought on. The invading army became one of occupation, but

complacency after apparent victory, coupled with the need for economy, weakened the occupying force. In November, 1841, there was an uprising in Kabul; Burnes was killed, along with many others. Though Dōst Moḥammad was a prisoner in India, his son Akbar had no intention of allowing the British under Macnaghten to negotiate their way out of trouble or to stay in Kabul. Macnaghten was killed, and only a handful of the Kabul garrison survived the ordeal of a negotiated "evacuation march" to Jalālābād; those who were not slaughtered by the Afghans froze in the snow en route. Shah Šoǰāʿ remained for a while in the Bālā Ḥeṣār in Kabul; then he too was assassinated.

A change of governor general in India, coinciding with a change of government in London, resulted in the dispatch of an "army of retribution" to Afghanistan in 1842. The humiliation of the British in India was in large measure avenged (though never forgotten by their sepoys), but once the army's mission was accomplished, it returned to India with Akbar's hostages, "leaving the Afghans themselves to create a government amidst the anarchy which is the consequence of their crimes," according to Governor General Ellenborough's proclamation at Simla on 1 October 1842 (Norris, *First Afghan War*, p. 451). In reality there was no more anarchy than before, except in the limited sense that Shah Šoǰāʿ's death deprived Kabul of a nominal ruler, however weak. Dōst Moḥammad returned to the capital in 1843.

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ii. Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80)

The British objective was to impose advice and a military presence on Afghanistan in order to keep the Russians far from India. After six years of succession quarrels among Dōst Moḥammad's sons, Šēr ʿAlī became amir in 1869 (see Afghanistan, x). Four years later, he was on good terms with the British in India, having being assured that he could count on their friendship and support; the viceroy (Lord Mayo) had given him two batteries of artillery and some thousands of sets of weapons for his soldiers. In September, 1873, Šēr ʿAlī asked Mayo's successor, Northbrook, what Britain would do if Russia, his new neighbor on the north, attacked Afghanistan; on instructions from London, Northbrook declined to give a straight answer. Šēr ʿAlī was disappointed, since he wanted assurances of help without interference in his internal affairs. But the resurgence of a "forward" policy in India and London meant that he was unlikely to get the guarantee he wanted without the interference he wished to avoid. The views of the British noninterventionists were submerged in the excitement generated by news of the latest Russian successes among the khanates and by the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey in 1877.

From October, 1876, to March, 1877, there were talks in Peshawar, but they foundered on the British desire to station soldiers on Afghanistan's northern frontier. When Disraeli's government sent troops to Malta as a warning to the Russians then at war with Turkey, the War Office in St. Petersburg sent a military mission to Kabul and three columns of troops toward the Afghan frontier; the Russian Foreign Office later denied knowledge of the moves. Knowing that the Treaty of Berlin had already been signed, the Russian military mission arrived in Afghanistan and was received in Kabul. Before long the British had a similar mission on the way. Šēr ʿAlī committed himself to the Russians just enough to destroy his credit with the British; he refused to receive the British mission and was sent an ultimatum, to which he never replied. On 21 November 1878 General Roberts (son of the British commander of Shah Šoǰāʿ's contingent forty years before) set in motion three columns of troops, thus beginning the Second Anglo-Afghan War.

Within a few months Šēr ʿAlī was dead, and his son Yaʿqūb had succeeded him. The Russians, in whom he had placed his trust, had made no attempt to help him. Inthe Treaty of Gandamak of May, 1879, Yaʿqūb Khan accepted British control of his foreign relations, agreed to receive a permanent British envoy in Kabul, allowed British forces to control the main passes into Afghanistan from

the south, and accepted an annual subsidy of 60,000 rupees. Yaʿqūb received his envoy, Sir Louis Cavagnari, but did nothing to stop the massacre of that envoy and his staff in September, 1879. Roberts reactivated his three columns, and within six weeks of the massacre Kabul was occupied and Yaʿqūb deposed.

For ten years ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān, a grandson of Dōst Moḥammad, had been living in exile in Samarqand, latterly as a pensioner of the Russians. Now they encouraged him to return to Afghanistan and fill the gap left by the abdication of Yaʿqūb. He did so in January, 1880, and was immediately welcomed by the British. In April Gladstone took over from Disraeli as prime minister with a firm policy of withdrawal, and in July the British formally recognized ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān as Afghanistan's ruler. Meanwhile Roberts and his troops were engaged with Afghan forces to the west. Ayyūb Khan, son of Šēr ʿAlī and a cousin of ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān, commanded the Afghan troops, who inflicted a heavy defeat on one British column at Maywand in July. After his famous forced march from Kabul to Qandahār, Roberts defeated Ayyūb Khan. Not until the spring of 1881 were the last British Indian troops withdrawn. ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān conceded British supervision of his foreign relations and a military presence in the passes. In return, Britain promised him a subsidy and help in resisting any unprovoked aggression. Being a strong and respected ruler, implacable in his dealings with internal enemies, he was able to keep his Afghan critics in check. A weaker amir would not have been able to subdue resentment of the severe British restraint on the Afghan's most prized possession—his independence.

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iii. Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919)

This was an undeclared war that lasted from 4 May to 3 June and resulted in Afghanistan's winning complete independence. Amir Amānallāh (1919-29) ascended the Afghan throne on 25 February after the assassination of Amir Ḥabībballāh (r. 1319-37/1901-19) and the five-day rule of Naṣrallāh Khan. An ardent nationalist who resented Britain's hegemony over Afghanistan, Amir Amānallāh immediately proclaimed his independence and demanded a new agreement with Britain to end Afghanistan's status as a virtual protectorate. In order to emphasize his demands, Amānallāh sent three of his generals to the frontier: Ṣāleḥ Moḥammad, the commander-in-chief, arrived at Dakka on 3 May; ʿAbd-al-Qoddūs Khan, the *ṣadr-e aʿẓam*, moved to the area of Ḵalāt-e Ḡilzay on 5 May, and aday later Moḥammad Nāder, the ex commander-in-

chief (and subsequent king of Afghanistan), arrived in Ḵōst with regular Afghan troops as well as several thousand tribesmen.

Hostilities began on 4 May 1919, when Afghan troops cut the water supply to Landī Kōtal on the Indian side of the border, and Britain retaliated by closing the Khyber Pass. It appears that the Afghans planned a concerted attack, but the forces of Ṣāleḥ Moḥammad were prematurely engaged. British forces had some successes, but these were neutralized when Nāder Khan established a new front in the southeast and attacked the British base at Thal. On 24 May Amānallāh responded to British feelers, and a ceasefire was called on 3 June 1919. Peace between Afghanistan and Britain was finally restored after a series of negotiations at Rawalpindi (8 August 1919), Mussoorie (1 8 July 1920), and Kabul (2 December 1921).

Until recently, historians have generally accepted the British interpretation of the causes of the war, which held that Amānallāh's control over Afghanistan was weakened because of the power struggle after the assassination of Amir Ḥabīballāh. Amānallāh imprisoned his uncle and rival to the throne, Naṣrallāh Khan, and freed members of the Moṣāḥebān family from arrest for suspected participation in the assassination plot. In this view, when Amānallāh saw his position endangered, he sought war with his neighbor as a device for unifying the people. However, recent research has shown that Amānallāh resorted to war to safeguard Afghanistan's independence, which had been unofficially secured at the end of World War I. He feared that British duplicity would deprive him of the reward he expected for Afghanistan's neutrality and bring about the return of pre-war British hegemony. A look at the historical background of Anglo-Afghan relations should adequately support this conclusion. In the late 19th century, and increasingly during the early 20th century, the Afghan people and their rulers grew resentful of Afghanistan's status vis-à-vis Britain. Under an agreement concluded with Amir ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān (r. 1297-1319/1880-1901), Britain paid a subsidy of 1,200,000 rupees (increased to a total of 2,050,000 by 1915) and guaranteed to protect the country from unprovoked aggression by a foreign power, provided that Afghanistan delegated the conduct of its foreign relations to Britain. While this arrangement gave a measure of protection from czarist Russia, it left Afghanistan at the mercy of Britain's expansionist search for a "scientific frontier" in the northwest of India.

ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān and his successor therefore adopted a policy of isolationism and militant nationalism in order to keep Britain at arm's length; yet there

was no guarantee that Britain and Russia would not collaborate in solving the "Afghanistan question" once and for all. This was obviously the intention of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided Iran into spheres of influence and proposed the same for Afghanistan. In spite of Amir Ḥabībballāh's strong sympathies for the Ottoman Empire, he did not join the "holy war" against Britain but made it clear that Afghanistan was to be properly rewarded for its neutrality. He demanded British recognition of Afghanistan's independence, but all he obtained was a promise of 10 million rupees. There are indications that Ḥabībballāh intended to force Britain to comply with his demands, but he was assassinated soon after the war, and there is no doubt that the failure of his foreign policy was one factor contributing to his assassination.

When Amānallāh eventually succeeded to the throne, he unilaterally declared Afghanistan independent. But there were other factors that convinced the Afghan ruler to resort to war: Lord Chelmsford, the viceroy of India, refused to conclude a new treaty with Amānallāh, in spite of Britain's insistence after the death of Amir ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān that the agreements were between the British government and the person of the amir, and therefore subject to renegotiation with each successor. In correspondence between the two states, Britain merely acknowledged Amānallāh's election as amir "by the populace of Kabul and its surroundings," further implying that he was not in complete control of his country. Amir Amānallāh's new envoy to India was snubbed at the border when he was asked "what amir" he represented. Finally, the subsidy was halted. Britain could not both insist that no new agreements were needed and refuse to acknowledge Amānallāh as the new ruler of Afghanistan. The Afghan ruler feared that Afghanistan would loose both its independence and the reward for its neutrality during the war. World War I ended Afghanistan's isolation; representatives of the Central Powers were in Kabul and would continue to stay. The Soviet Revolution brought Russians to Kabul; Iran and Turkey sent emissaries, and the Afghan ruler felt it was in the best interest of his country to conduct his own diplomatic relations with the world. India was weak, with riots and uprisings threatened in many parts; the Afghans in the northwest of India seemed ready to revolt, and Peshawar appeared ripe for reconquest by the Afghans. It was therefore not surprising that Amānallāh seized the unique opportunity to win by force what Britain was unwilling to give its ally: Afghanistan's internal and external independence.

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