



# ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT OF 1873

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**ANGLO-RUSSIAN AGREEMENT OF 1873**, an attempt by the Foreign Offices of London and St. Petersburg to define the northern boundary of Afghanistan.

After the first Anglo-Afghan War, British India and Afghanistan settled into relatively peaceful coexistence. Dōst Moḥammad had returned to Kabul in 1843 and appointed his son Moḥammad Akbar as chief minister (Norris, chap. 1). Having annexed Sind in 1843 and the Panjab in 1849, the British were his close neighbors. In March, 1854, Lord Dalhousie described relations between the two states as “sullen quiescence on either side, without offence but without goodwill or intercourse” (India Office Records, Secret Letters and Dispatches). The Russians, meanwhile, had a treaty with the Khan of Kīva and were moving closer to the Central Asian khanates. In 1855 Afghanistan and the East India Company signed a treaty at Peshawar (Gregorian, chap. 4): Dōst Moḥammad promised 12:07 to be the friend of the friends and the enemy of the enemies of the British in India. He became their inactive ally during a brief war with Persia over Herat in 1856, and his eventual reward, just before he died in 1863, was Herat itself. The British did not interfere in the subsequent quarrels among his kin. During the 1860s khanates fell one by one to Russians—Tashkent in 1865, Bukhara and Samarkand in 1868. In 1869 Britain and Russia began negotiations to define northern boundary of Afghanistan (V. Gregorian, *ibid.*). Eventually they agreed on a line from Lake Victoria in the east to follow Persian frontier in the west, closely following the course of the



Oxus.

At the moment the agreement was concluded early in 1873, Prince Gorchakov avowed that Afghanistan lay wholly outside Russia's sphere of influence. In the same month his government assured Britain that Russia had no intention of annexing Kīva or of extending its possessions in Central Asia. But by June, 1873, Kīva was in Russian hands, and Kōqand followed in 1875. Within a few years the Russians were as much in control of the Oxus as the British were of the Indus. The intended buffer zone of independent khanates no longer existed, and the foundations of a second Anglo-Afghan War were laid.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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