

**THE GEOGRAPHICAL BASES OF THE BOUNDARIES  
OF AFGHANISTAN**

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OF AFGHANISTAN**

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**NEW DELHI**

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the geographical factors which serve, or should serve, as bases for the boundaries of Afghanistan. The analysis attempts to deal with the evolution of the definition, of the position and of the state functions of <sup>the boundaries of</sup> Afghanistan. Taking note of the importance given to political factors in the determination of the boundaries of Afghanistan, the paper attempts to emphasise the fact that generally speaking, political considerations have over-ridden geographical realities in this area.

In studying the evolution of the devices and concepts used in the delimitation of the boundaries of Afghanistan, the paper attempts to bring out the influence of the Frontier Philosophy which guided the attitudes of the countries involved in the boundary making of Afghanistan.

It has been necessary to examine the characteristics of the various segments of Afghanistan's boundaries and also of the principles on which they were based.

The analysis shows that the boundaries of Afghanistan are of special interest and while taking note of the genesis of the concepts involved brings about the following hypothesis:

That it was the collusion of two politico-territorial systems, namely, Great Britain and Russia, which led to the definition, delimitation and demarcation of the boundaries of Afghanistan, and that this process came about in successive stages. The primary stage was marked by a rather vague

definition of the frontier zones which divided Russia and Britain in Central Asia. The secondary stage was that in which the vague frontier zones acquired an internal political form as expressed by a Buffer State. The tertiary stage followed when the secondary stage collapsed to give way to a clearer definition and delimitation of the boundaries of the Buffer State - Afghanistan.

The historical element has been all too important. The evolution of the boundaries of Afghanistan cannot be understood without the study of the British and Russian political expansion and confrontation in the nineteenth century in Central Asia.

The historical element has, however, beclouded the geographical factors. The paper goes in the quest of those geographical factors which give a sense and rationale to political boundaries.

*A. Copalawant*

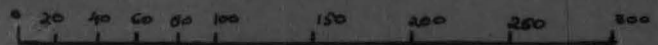
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NEW DELHI  
28 SEPTEMBER, 1972

# Map of Afghanistan



SCALE 1 INCH = 96 MILES



## INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan lies in the south-western corner of central Asia between 29° and 38° North latitude and between 61° and 72° East longitude with Wakhan corridor extending upto 75° East longitude. It is bounded in the West by Persia (Iran); in the North by Russia (U.S.S.R.); in the extreme north-east (the top of Wakhan corridor) by China; in the east and south by Pakistan. It is completely land-locked. It has an estimated area of 264,000 square miles, the extreme length from west to east is 770 miles and the greatest width from north to south is over 350 miles.

The northern Afghanistan is easily accessible from Russia Turkistan along the Hari Rud at Zulfiqar and by railroad from Merv to Herat and along the Murghab river between Maruchak and Sala Murghab and from several points along the Oxus river. In the west a route from Meshad (Iran) runs via Rurbad-i-Sheikh Jan to Herat with a longer route viz. Zulfiqar. Another route is a caravan route from Nasratabad in Persian (Iranian) Seistan passes twenty miles below the river Helmund and the Afghan border to Farah and Farah is linked with Herat, Girishk and Kandahar.

In the east, Khyber Pass is very important. A route from Peshawar passes through Khyber and connects Kabul. This route passes <sup>via</sup> Jalalabad. Another important route is that of New Chaman. From Chaman a road extends upto Kandahar. In the extreme north there are mountain trails leading from places north of Peshawar



to Nuristan and Badakshan and a caravan route traverses along the Kokcha river thereby connecting Faizabad.

Afghanistan has very few navigable rivers and hence most of the transportation is carried on land routes. Inside Afghanistan Kabul is directly linked with Ghazni and Kandahar. Thence to Girishk and through Farah to Herat. From Herat, Maimanah, Andhkoi, Shibarghan, Balk and Maizar-i-Sheriff and Tashqurghan are connected with Kabul.

Added to this, the strategical position of Afghanistan had made <sup>it</sup> the cross-roads of Asia, where the communication routes from <sup>0</sup> all over Asia converge before extending themselves to the Indian sub-continent. It was this importance which had made Afghanistan the highway of conquest for the powers on its either side and it soon became the focus of the expanding Russian and British empires in the nineteenth century. The rivalry between these two powers had made Afghanistan their arena. Moreover, Afghanistan was destroyed and ravaged by conquerors so that it became an isolated country. Added to this the country experienced several instances of civil wars which forced <sup>it</sup> to close itself to the outside world.

The study of the evolution of the boundaries of Afghanistan involves a detailed analysis of its historical and political functions in the south-western corner of central Asia. Afghanistan, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries formed, at times, a frontier or a part of the Persian and Mughal empires. Its territorial limits were undefined as it had, until the mid-

eighteenth century, never attained independence. But when it achieved its freedom from foreign domination, it inadvertently involved itself in the great power game of the nineteenth century between Russia and Britain in Central Asia.

The Afghan boundaries had evolved gradually. The first ever recorded boundary agreement of Afghanistan between the eastern Ghilzais and the Abdalis of Herat was in the early eighteenth century. It reached its maximum outward expansion during Ahmed Shah Durrani's rule over Afghanistan. Even in this, the development of boundaries was greatly influenced by historical factors. The impact of history in the boundary evolution of Afghanistan was predominant. This factor with the combination of political factors in operation during the nineteenth century was responsible for delimitation of the boundaries of Afghanistan with Russia, Persia (Iran) and British India (now Pakistan).

Apart from the external political and military factors which were being exerted by the expanding British and Russian empires in Central Asia, much of the nineteenth century saw Afghanistan in internal turmoil where one group after another attempted to grab power. The unstable political conditions in Afghanistan and the colonial expansion of Russia and Britain forced it to assume the posture of a buffer state and this character influenced the process of demarcation of its boundaries with the neighbouring countries. Thus in 1873 Russia and Britain negotiated a boundary settlement of the northern frontier

of Afghanistan with Russia and this boundary was demarcated in 1885. Similarly Afghanistan's western boundary with Persia was settled in three agreements in 1872, 1888 and 1904-5. Afghanistan's eastern and southern boundary with British India was settled in 1895.

The purpose of this analysis is to study the geographical basis of the boundaries of Afghanistan. Keeping in view that the boundaries have resulted due to the conflict of the colonial interests of Russia and Britain in Central Asia in the nineteenth century, the study attempts to analyse the boundary negotiations and the lack of co-ordination between the negotiated boundaries of Afghanistan and the geographical features of the area through which the boundary passes. Furthermore, the British and Russian attempt to establish a defensive and offensive boundary at the cost of the natural and traditional extent of Afghanistan is also emphasised.

In analysing the evolution of boundaries in their definition, position and their functional aspects the analysis attempts to infer the influence of geographical factors on the location of the Afghan boundaries and their reciprocal influence upon the development of the landscape through which they are drawn.

As the geographical knowledge is a pre-requisite to the demarcation of the boundaries, the study speculates that the lack of geographical knowledge had been the primary cause for the frictions and disputes, which, the negotiated boundaries of

Afghanistan failed to avoid. It also analyses the subsequent attempts to define the boundaries which were made necessary by exploration during the demarcation of the boundary.

The way in which the boundaries of Afghanistan had influenced the development of the frontiers and the lives of the peoples inhabiting it had also necessitated the study of the laws of territorial growth of the peoples of Afghanistan and the State of Afghanistan itself and, in order to measure the geographical significance of the boundary, the study attempts to analyse the relationship which the original boundary bore to the landscape of the frontier of Afghanistan at the time when the boundaries were drawn. This has involved the application of the historical perspective and the physical alignment of the boundaries.

The application of the principles of the historical perspective thus forms the first chapter, where the evolution of the Afghan boundaries are emphasised. The second chapter studies the physical alignment of the boundaries. The study attempts to reveal the laws of territorial growth of the peoples and the State as conditioned by the physical environment on which the boundaries are abstractly impressed.

The <sup>succeeding</sup> chapters include the boundary negotiations which resulted in the boundary delimitation and demarcation of Afghanistan. It attempts to study the frictions and disputes which the boundary definition had brought. It further studies the correlation between the boundary drawn and the conception

of territorial limit among the Afghans and finally the role of colonial powers which were responsible for all the inadequacies of the Afghan boundaries.

The information about the boundary had been gathered by studying the relevant documents, especially the boundary treaties and the publication of memoirs by people involved in the negotiation and demarcation. Thus it is on the treaties and personal publications this study draw exclusive reference. Although personal accounts have not been uniformly useful, most of them had included maps which contain all the relevant geographical information available at that time.

The maps had provided invaluable information about the cultural landscapes at the time when the boundary was drawn and, therefore, provided a standard base against the subsequent changes in the boundary definition.

Thus the analysis attempts to emphasise the importance of the complete geographical knowledge in determining the boundary and explains thereby the reasons of the boundary frictions and disputes which the state of Afghanistan had particularly with British India (and later with Pakistan).

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## Chapter I

### THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOUNDARIES OF AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan, by virtue of its location in the southwestern corner of Central Asia, has been the meeting place of many peoples. As a result, Afghanistan comprises a variety of ethnic groups with diverse origin. The physical location of Afghanistan, between the plateaus of Central Asia and the fertile valleys of River Oxus on the one hand and the River Indus on the other, has greatly influenced the historic movements of peoples of diverse origin into Afghanistan. Consequently, the historic movement of peoples had brought fluctuating territorial extent, until the boundaries of Afghanistan were defined in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Hence, due to the impact of the location "periodically a race of conquerors appear on the Oxus and establish themselves in the northern areas of the country of the Hindu Kush. After a pause, a forward impulse cause them to move across the passes or round the western flank of the mountains; another pause and they march on to the conquest of northern India. Once established in India the centre of interest and of sovereignty moves south, the fissiparous tendencies of the great divide between the southern and Central Asia assert themselves and the areas north of the Hindu Kush break away or are overrun by a fresh swarm of conquerors...."<sup>1</sup>

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1 W.K. Fraser-Tytler (Revised by M.C. Gillet), Afghanistan:

The true Afghans had been the nomadic people inhabiting the mountains and defiles of the Hindu Kush. Thus even before the emergence of Afghanistan as a country in 1747, "...the Afghans were long recognised as a separate people".<sup>2</sup> The attempts made by these nomadic Afghans for independence were spasmodic and ephmeral. This was partly due to lack of cohesion among them and the perpetual flow of conquering tribes across the Hindu Kush.

In the sixteenth century Zahir-ud-din-Babur, the Barlas Turk, crossed the mountains of Hindu Kush at Qipchak Pass and descended the Ghorband Valley in 1504. He defeated the Mongol dynasty of the IL Khan and captured Kabul. He recognised the importance of the plateau on which Kabul was located (as it commands the approaches to northern and Central Asia). He gradually extended his power over the southern region of the Hindu Kush and captured the City of Kandahar in 1522.

It was this starting point for the Afghans to emerge as an important factor in shaping the future of the country. Babar's conception of Afghanistan was the country south of Kabul-Peshawar road. Meanwhile, the Persians under Shah Ismail consolidated their position in Herat. Badakshan remained under the control of Babar although he lost his Trans-Oxus territory.

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A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia (London, 1967), p. 17.

2 Arthur Swinson, North-West Frontier, People and Events, 1839-1947 (Corgi Book, 1967), p. 25.

In 1526 Babar defeated Ibrahim Lodi and established the Mughal rule in India which lasted for more than two hundred years. However, with the revival of Persian expansion under Shah Ismail, Afghanistan was bitterly contested by the two great empires of India and Persia. The Mughals held Kabul and surrounding territory firmly under their control for nearly two hundred years. However, the Perso-Mughal rivalry became intense in the southern province and in the tribal belt which separated Kabul and its surrounding territories with the Indus valley. Persia had seized Herat and Seistan and contested Kandahar with the Mughals.

The strategic importance of Kandahar was equally recognised by the Mughals and the Persians. It is evident from the frequent shifts of the City of Kandahar from Persia to Mughal suzerainty and back. This changing balance of power between the two empires had enabled the tribes to play off one power against the other and enabled the expanding Uzbeks to absorb the quasi-independent provinces in the northern most Afghanistan.

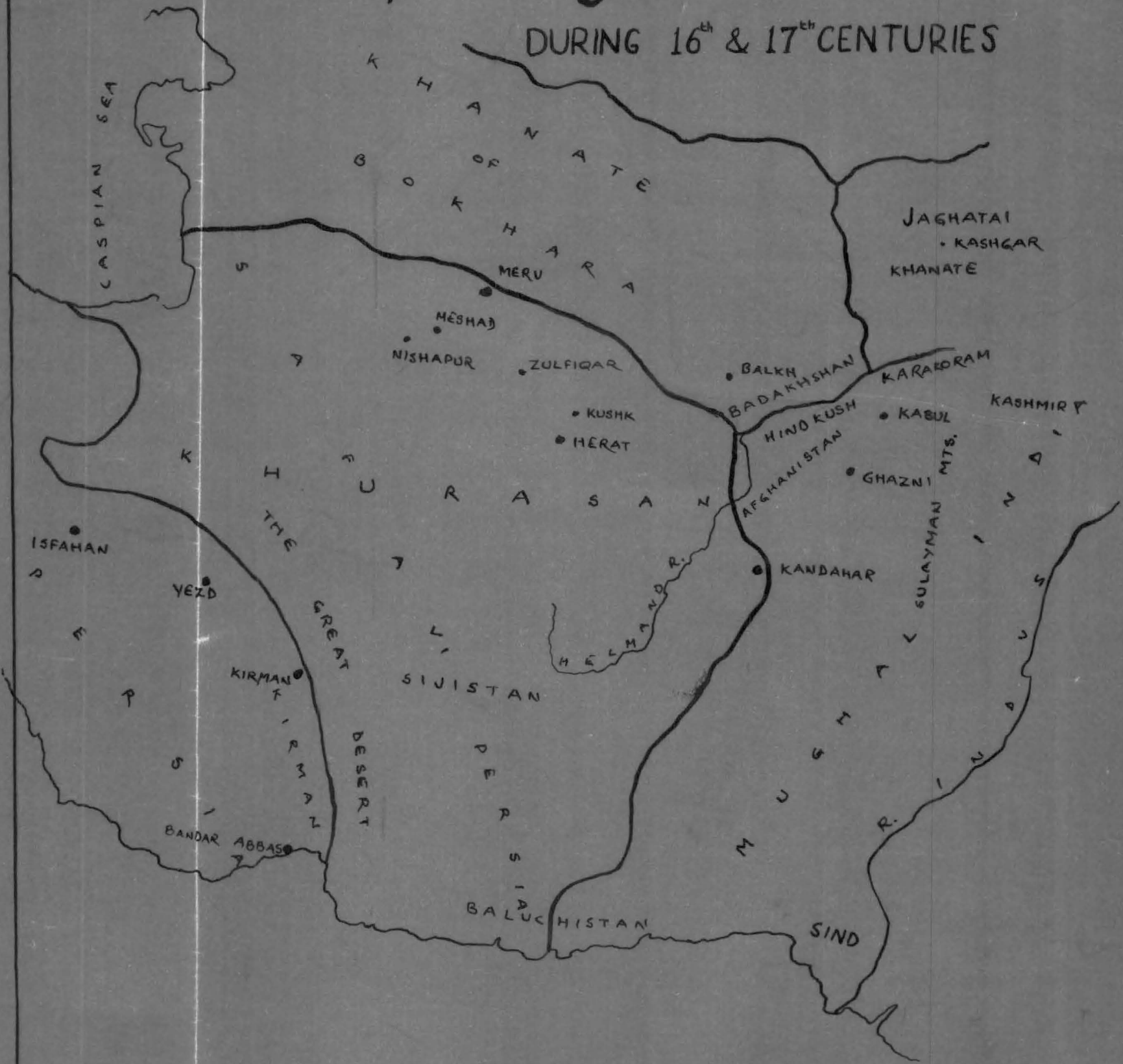
The stability of the tribal belt between the Indus Valley and Kabul determined the Mughal position against the Persians in the south. The Mughals accordingly had subdued these tribes who had, under Sher Shah Suri, wrested the power from the Mughals temporarily.

In order to retrieve the Trans-Oxus territories, the Mughals captured Balkh in 1641. Thereafter Balkh and Termaz remained in the Mughal hands. However, in 1648 the Mughals withdrew from the Oxus Valley to Kabul. In the same year



# Map of Afghanistan

DURING 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES



SCALE 1:10,000,000  
0 50 100 150 200 250 300 MILES

Kandahar was seized by Persia and remained in their hands for nearly sixty years in spite of several attempts by successive Mughal rulers to retrieve it back.

The Mughals began to call their Trans-Indus territories<sup>3</sup> as especially the country Hindu Kush, as AFGHANISTAN.

The loss of Kandahar to the Persians deprived the Mughals of any effective influence in the southern region of the Hindu Kush and "... the country as far north as Char Bagh was in Persian hands"<sup>4</sup>. The Map (2) clearly indicates that the southern Afghanistan including much of western Afghanistan, was well under Saffavi Persia's influence and control. It further enables us to understand that Persia was at its political zenith and the Mughals in India, though very well established were hard struck in attempting to control the vital borderlands in the north-west of the Indian subcontinent.

The eighteenth century saw the downfall of the Saffavi dynasty of Persia and the decline of Mughals in India.

The Ghilzais in Kandahar were subjugated ruthlessly by the Persian Governor Gurgan Khan. The Ghilzais under Mir Weis revolted and overthrew the Persian rule in 1709. It is also said that Mir Weis assumed power in 1712-13. This revolt was the beginning of a series of uprisings against the Persian and Mughal rule. The revolt spread gradually throughout

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3 G.P. Tate, The Kingdom of Afghanistan: An Historical Sketch (Bombay, 1911), p. 7.

4 Ibid., p. 30.

Afghanistan and "...the state of Afghan life and sentiment in the east was reflected in the west".<sup>5</sup>

The Abdalis who succeeded in obtaining concession from the Persians to recognise the Sado as their chief, had indirectly given the Ghilzais a cue to further their ambition of independence from the Persians. The expanding Ghilzais clashed with the Abdalis of Herat who had driven out the Persians from Herat. The confrontation between the Abdalis and the Ghilzais ended in the first ever recorded boundary agreement of Afghanistan. The boundary agreement between the two was that "the country to north and east of Garmab stream was to be regarded as belonging to the Ghilzais and all that lay to the south and west of the stream--<sup>6</sup> to the Abdalis". This boundary perhaps had been the only agreement in Afghanistan which treated the parties concerned equally. ~~[The accompanying map (3) clearly elucidates the delimitation of the region between the Ghilzais and the Abdalis.]~~

The Ghilzais expanded westwards. Narmashir, Kerman, Yes and Farrahabad were annexed by the Ghilzai Mohamud in 1722. Isfahan the capital of the Safavi Persia was captured in the same year.

In 1723 Sazvin, Kum and Kashan were added to the Ghilzai domain. In 1725 Bandar Abbas and Shiraz were added. In 1727 a treaty was concluded with Turkey which enabled the Ghilzai

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5 D.C. Boulger, England and Russia in Central Asia, vol. I, (London, 1879), p. 131.

6 G.P. Tate, n. 3, p. 34.

# Map of Afghanistan The Empire of the Ghilzais.



SCALE 1:10,000,000  
0. 50. 100. 150. 200. 250. 300.  
MILES

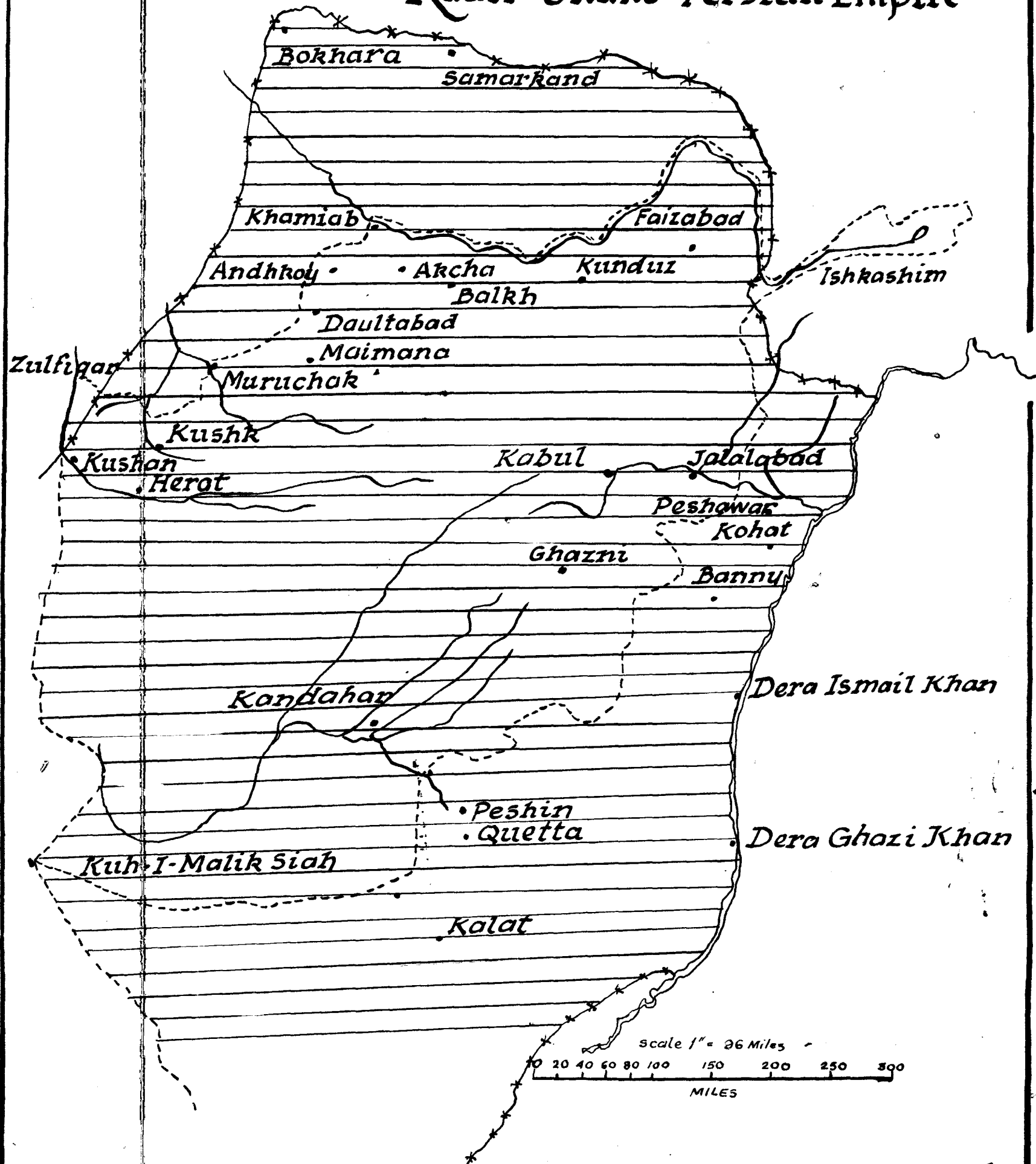
Ashraff to become the Shah of Persia.

The Ghilzais were driven out of Persia by Shah Thamshap and Nadir Kuli Khan (Nadir Shah) in 1738. Thus the Afghan empire of the Ghilzais in Persia lasted only for a short time. It had extended upto the eastern frontiers of Turkey which formed its western boundary. In the south was the Arabian Sea and the northern frontiers were marked by Pul-i-Abrishan or the Bridge of Silk some 70 miles west of Sabzawan on the Meshad-Tehran road. The eastern boundary was marked by Kandahar and surrounding country. The Ghilzai empire, though short lived had indicated the potential of the Afghan tribes to build and carve out an empire for themselves. The map (3) is ample evidence of the territorial extent of the Ghilzai empire and whose potential had prompted, the successive conquerors to subjugate ruthlessly the Ghilzai, lest their empire could disintegrate under the probable growth of the Ghilzai strength.

The re-emergence of Persian authority in Kandahar was a blow to the Ghilzai movement for independence. Since then, the Ghilzais started declining and their role was taken over by the Abdalis.

Nadir Kuli Khan ousted Shah Thamshap and became the Shah of Persia. He became to be known as Nadir Shah. After capturing Kandahar in 1738 Nadir Shah conquered Herat, Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar. In the last two places he defeated the Mughals. He finally sacked Delhi. Thus Nadir Shah annexed all Mughal possessions in the Trans-Indus region. River Indus became the

# Map of Afghanistan Nadir Shah's Persian Empire

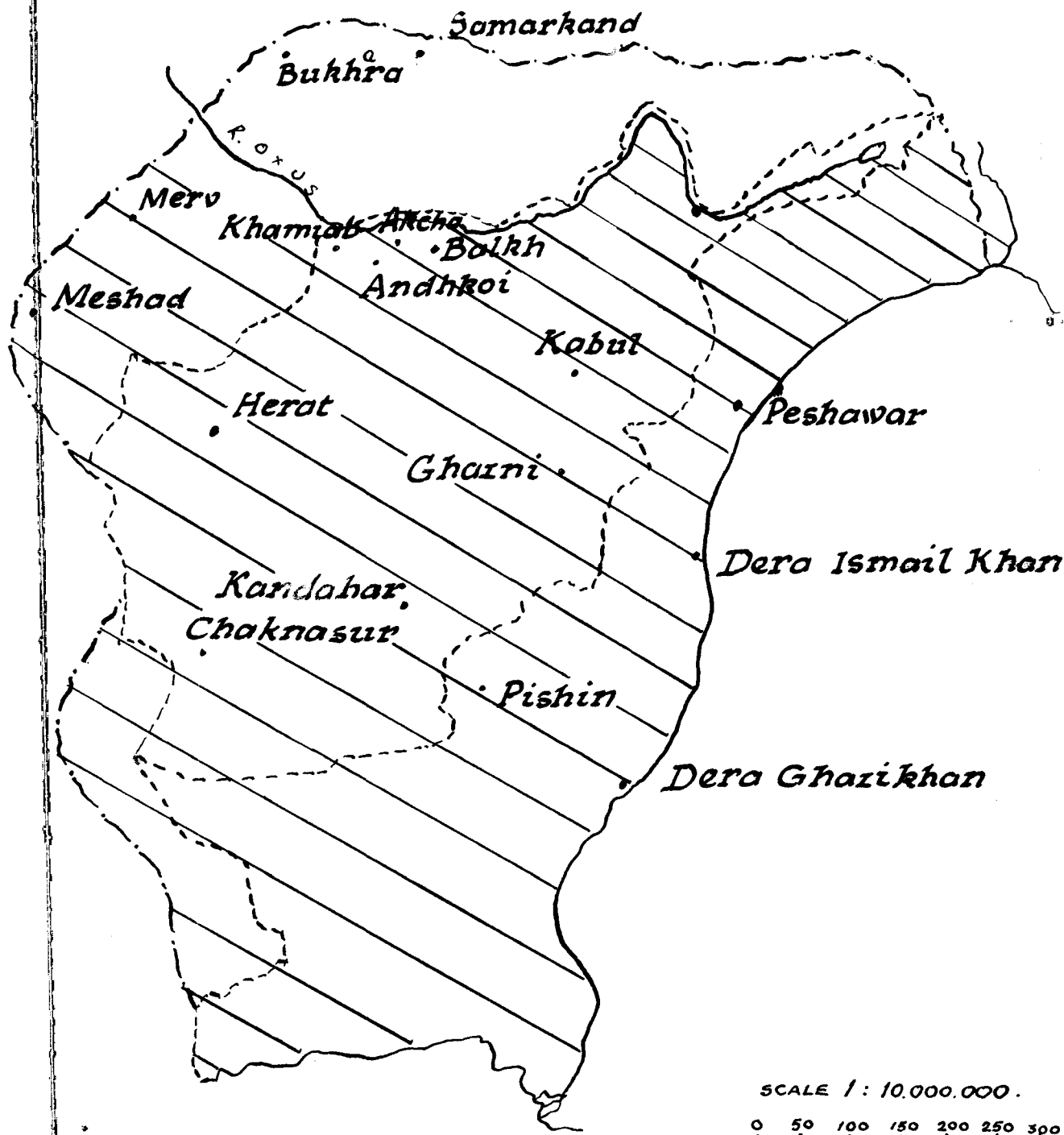


political frontier between the Persian empire and the decaying Mughal empire in India. In 1740 Nadir Shah captured Bokhara and Khiva, and his empire extended from Bokhara and Khiva in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south. His western boundary was with Turkey while River Indus became the eastern limit of his vast Persian domain. Nadir Shah's empire as illustrated by map (5) is a clear indicator of the extent of the Persian empire. Nadir Shah had not only annexed the whole of Afghanistan but had ousted the Mughal hold in Kabul, which later proved to be advantageous to Ahmed Shah Durrani in his bid for power in 1747. Further the map has attempted to illustrate, by way of inference, the selection of the river Indus as a political frontier not only by Nadir Shah but also by Ahmed Shah Durrani. In 1747 Nadir Shah was murdered. The Abdalis became the focii of the future of Afghanistan.

The Sadozais under Ahmed Khan (also known as Shah) were the Afghan bodyguards of Nadir Shah. Upon his (Nadir Shah's) death in 1747 the Afghan bodyguards retreated to Kandahar and thereby laid the foundation of the modern Afghanistan.

Ahmed Khan (Shah) was elected as the first king of the Afghans and established Kandahar as the capital of the Afghan empire. Ahmed Shah began consolidating his new empire. He began his conquest by capturing Kabul and Kabul river valley. He also extended his empire in the north and north-west of the Hindu Kush. He captured Sestán and Herat in 1749. In the same year Khorassan was also included. He seized Cis-Oxus

# Map of Afghanistan Ahmed Shah's Durani Empire



SCALE 1 : 10,000,000.





territories from Maimana to Badakhshan and the mountainous tract of Bamian and by 1750 had direct Afghan control over the mountains and all the countries of the Hindu Kush lying between the Indus and the Oxus rivers. By 1751 he had brought Kashmir, Lahore and Multan under his control. In 1761 he sacked Delhi. Thus Ahmed Shah's empire "...extended from Meshad (the modern Iran) to Kashmir, from river Oxus in the north to river Sutluj in the east and Arabian Sea in the South<sup>7</sup>". The emergence of Abdalis as a national factor in 1747, is important because the Abdalis under Ahmed Shah were the first and last of the Afghan rulers who extended their dominion. Ahmed Shah was perhaps the only ruler who gave a definite limit to Afghanistan. The following map (5) indicates the territorial limits of Ahmed Shah's Afghanistan. The map is also significant because, after Ahmed Shah's death in 1773, the successive Afghan rulers were mainly concerned with keeping the unity of the empire. As a consequence, coupled with other factors, the Afghan empire had begun to disintegrate rapidly in the early nineteenth century. The northern and western boundaries of Ahmed Shah's empire lay along approximately in the same lines of today. The southern and the eastern boundaries extended to include the complete Pathan Land which consisted of Baluchistan and the North Western Frontier Province (these are now in Pakistan). The Afghan empire again had the river Indus as a political frontier with India.

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7      Mohammad Ali, Afghanistan (Kabul, 1963), p. 1.

The death of Ahmed Shah in 1773 was a sign of tragic denouement. Timur Shah had to fight for the throne with his brother Sulaiman Mirza who proclaimed himself the King in Kandahar, the city dominating the south-western regions of Afghanistan. Sulaiman was defeated. Timur Shah became the King of Afghanistan. But he transferred his capital from Kandahar to Kabul and Kabul remains the capital of Afghanistan from that day.

The weakening of the Afghan empire was evident from the proclamation of independence by Bokhara and Sind. "At Timur's death, the Durrani empire, though weakened, still included the following areas: Kashmir, Lahore, Multan, Peshawar, all Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush, Herat on the west and the province of Balkh and Khulm in the Oxus Valley. The Afghan ruler still, therefore, controlled the Hindu Kush and much of northern India, while his suzerainty was acknowledged by Kalat, Baluchistan and Persian Khurasan<sup>8</sup>". The Afghan empire could have survived as an independent nation, in spite of the growing political pressures exerted upon it in its northern and eastern frontiers. All it needed was a stable government to achieve this, but, was plagued by internal rivalries and civil wars.

Timur Shah died in 1793 and with his death the Afghan empire began to disintegrate. Timur Shah failed to nominate a heir and this created rivalry and internecine fights. The following quarter of a century was an era of battles and palace

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8 Fraser-Tytler, n. 1, p. 66.

intrigues for the throne. Important among Timur's sons to assume power were Zaman Shah, Mahmud and Shan Shuja. From 1793 to 1818 the throne of Kabul was alternatively shared by the above mentioned sons of Timur. Zaman Shah was disposed by Mahmud in 1800 and he in turn was disposed by Shah Shuja in 1803. In 1809 Mahmud made his second bid for power and ousted Shan Shuja. Mahmud's second bid thus proved disastrous not only to Afghanistan but also to the Sadozais, for it resulted in "the culmination of the Sadozais<sup>9</sup> dynasty" as the ruling clan in Afghanistan in 1818. Meanwhile, the British expansion in South Asia was rapidly progressing. In 1804, they concluded a treaty with Persia, which enabled them to establish a strong foothold to further their colonial interests. They were not only aware of the unstable political conditions of the Afghan empire but were also convinced of the growing strength of the Persians. The significance of this is clear from the fact that the British were separated from the Afghan empire by the Maharatha and the Sikh dominion. Although the British could not exert dominant influence on these states, they despatched Honourable (later Sir) Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1809 to Kabul to negotiate a treaty with Afghanistan. This treaty concluded with the then Amir of Afghanistan, Sher Shuja, was perhaps a reflection of the British intention and the fear of Persia taking over much of the territories, before it (British) could assume direct control of territories so that it would enable her to establish

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9 G.P. Tate, n. 3, p. 8.

direct frontier with Persia and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler, seized Multan in 1818 and annexed Kashmir and Dera Ghazi Khan in 1820. In the following year he brought Dera Ismail Khan under his rule. "This action was to prove one of the most important events in the whole history of the frontier and shape events which have followed right upto today"<sup>10</sup>. The downfall of the ruling tribes in 1818 had left Afghanistan without a successor to the throne. The internecine warfare continued for eight years upto 1826 and this continued warfare led one province after another to break away from the central authority of the Afghans. In Herat Shah Mahamud established himself. In the southern part Por Dil and others of the Muhammadzai brothers controlled from the Persian border to Ghazni. Thus the integrity of Afghan power shattered and in this confusion Dost Mohammad Khan asserted his right for the throne in Kabul.

Dost Mohammad Khan had little left of Ahmed Shah's empire and controlled an area with a less than a hundred miles radius from Kabul. He had established the Muhammadzais to the throne of Afghanistan and this dynasty continues to rule Afghanistan from that day.

The Peshawar Valley was seized by the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh in 1835. This encroachment of Afghan territory was met with force by Dost Mohammad Khan who defeated the Sikhs. The

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10 Arthur Swinson, n. 2, p. 28.

Amir sought the intervention of the British in India to settle the differences.

The advent of the nineteenth century not only brought radical changes in Afghanistan but also saw in Central Asia, the Russian and British expansion which had ultimately led these two powers to confront with each other along a line stretching from the Chinese frontiers through the Sarikol ranges and down the Oxus to Kara Bel Plateau to Hari Rud and frontiers of Persia. The countries which separated these two powers were Khiva, Merv and Bokhara on the Russian side and Punjab, Sind, Kalat and Kashmir on the British side, with Afghanistan occupying the middle portion.

In 1837, Captain (later Sir) Alexander Burnes left for Kabul on a commercial mission. Burnes' mission, inspite of its commercial character, inevitably concerned itself on the political developments. He had no authority or direct political power for negotiations. As a result Burnes' mission was a failure in its entirety, although his mission on the Persian build up and Russian activity against Herat was illuminating. The British in India did not intervene between Dost Mohammad Khan and Ranjit Singh and this (the British attitude to support the Sikhs) created animosity between Afghanistan and the British and formed one of the primary reasons for the First Anglo-Afghan War.

The use of force by the British compelled Persia to lift the seige of Herat. Russia, which was the main party to influence Persia on Herat, had all its hopes quashed. "It had

been a near thing; a little more determination by Shah....(of Persia)...before the walls of Herat and a little less courage by the Afghans within them would certainly have altered the story of Hindu Kush and might well have affected the future of all Central Asia"<sup>11</sup>.

Meanwhile the British had concluded a tripartite treaty with Ex-Amir Sher Shuja and Ranjit Singh in 1838. The treaty took the responsibility of installing Sher Shuja as Amir of Afghanistan and delimit the territory occupied by Ranjit Singh, that is Peshawar.

The combined armies of the British, Sikhs and Sher Shuja captured Kandahar in 1839. This advance of the combined armies had diverse effect on Afghans. They either deserted Dost Mohammad or were captured. Dost Mohammad with a few of his followers turned northwards into the mountains of the Hindu Kush. He crossed the frontiers of his kingdom over main ridge by Bamiyan. Sher Shuja thus became the Amir in 1839 and "for the first and last time in history the British were in actual physical occupation of the great north-western frontiers of their dominions"<sup>12</sup>.

In the latter part of 1840, Dost Mohammad surrendered himself to the British and was exiled in India. But by 1841 disaffection among the people arose in Kabul and surrounding

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11 Fraser-Tytler, n. 1, p. 104.

12 Ibid., p. 112.

districts against Sher Shuja. In one instance the eastern Ghilzais revolted. The revolt was followed with a massacre of the British troops. In retaliation the British led a punitive expedition and captured Kabul in 1842. During this period Sher Shuja was murdered. Dost Mohammad Khan, who was in exile in India, was recalled to the throne of Afghanistan and he began to consolidate his rule in Afghanistan. He annexed Balkh in 1850. In the same year he brought Kunduz and Badakhshan under his control. He once more extended Afghan dominion upto the Oxus and westward upto Seistan. In 1856 he occupied Farah and Herat in 1863.

Meanwhile, Russia gradually expanded herself in Central Asia, and this was viewed with concern by the British in India. But, just as the Russians were expanding in Central Asia, the British had between 1843 and 1847, extended themselves upto Peshawar Valley by annexing Sind and Punjab. In 1863 Dost Mohammad Khan died and with his death Sher Ali had to fight for his throne. He defeated his rivals and by 1869 established a firm rule in Afghanistan.

Russia had annexed Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand in 1868 and Bokhara in 1869. They consolidated their gains by creating the province of Russian Turkestan. In 1873 they annexed Khiva. Thus only Merv and the Oxus remained between Russia and Afghanistan. The boundary talk between Great Britain and Russia started in 1869. Finally by 1873 both Britain and Russia agreed to delimit the northern frontiers of Afghanistan. The agreement

followed that "...the course of Oxus from its source in the Pamirs to a point named Khwaja Salar and thence south-west to the Persian border so as to include within Afghan limits the provinces of Balkh, Andkhvī, Maimana and Herat. The Russian Government had agreed that the territories of the Amir contained by this boundary were completely outside the sphere within which they might be called on to exercise influence"<sup>13</sup>.

Meanwhile in 1872, Seistan region became the bone of contention between Afghanistan and Persia. Accordingly the British were asked to arbitrate. The joint Anglo-Perso-Afghan boundary Commission<sup>-on</sup> was established and General Sir Fredric Goldsmid was named as arbitrator. "Broadly speaking General Goldsmid found it advisable to distinguish between two Seistans, which he called respectively Seistan Proper and Outer Seistan... He gave Seistan<sup>14</sup> Proper to Persia and Outer Seistan to Afghanistan". Because of the nature of this award, which deprived Afghanistan of the revenue paying part of Seistan, the animosity of Amir Sher Ali against the British increased. This and the Sher Ali's leaning towards the Russians and the growing deterioration in the relations with the British, formed one of the primary causes for the Second Afghan War in 1879.

As a result of this war the British concluded a treaty with Afghanistan which is known as the Treaty of Gandamak and

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13 Ibid., p. 135.

14 Honourable G.A. Curzon, Persia and Persian Question, 2 vols. (London, 1893), pp. 231-321.



this decided certain points of frontiers which were of strategic importance to the British. The treaty which was signed on the 26 May 1879 enabled the British to control the vital areas of their frontier with Afghanistan. "The head of the Kurram Valley the Pass of Lundi Kotal (in the Khaibar), and the foot of northern slopes of the Khojak mountains were points in the boundary line which was henceforth to separate the interests of India from those of Afghanistan. At these points consequently the territories of British India and of Afghanistan touched each other. At these points they still touch each other. Peshin and Sibi were at the same time assigned to British jurisdiction".

Prior to the War the British annexed Dir, Swat and Bajaur. Thus Afghanistan was stripped of all of its strategically placed areas in the periphery of British India. Kandahar was made independent of Kabul rule. The river Indus thus lost its value as a political frontier between the powers. The importance of a political frontier shifted to the Hindu Kush. At the same time the ill-defined northern frontiers (as also for the rest) of Afghanistan came under the steadily narrowing circle of two colonially expanding and military powers of Russia and Britain in Asia.

In 1880 Abdur Rehman crossed the Hindu Kush and was recognised as the Amir of Afghanistan. The British, who were

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15 T.H. Holdich, The Indian Border Land 1880-1900 (London, 1901), p. 27.

aware of Abdur Rehman's twelve years' exile in Russia, were ignorant of his activities and were also doubtful of his role in Afghanistan. On assuming power, Amir Abdur Rehman accepted the British stipulation of leaving control of his foreign relations to British and included Kandahar in his rule. Thus Amir Abdur Rehman's Afghanistan by...<sup>16</sup>1881 was the 'buffer state' established" between the British India and Russia.

The efficacy of the buffer state was soon put to test when Russia occupied Merv in 1884, and came face to face with Britain. The British action in Afghanistan during the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1879 was followed by rapid Russian counter move in Central Asia which occupied Merv. Between the Russian possession of Merv and Afghanistan there was no natural boundary to check the Russian advance. The distance between Merv and Herat was only 200 miles. The concern shown by the British thus became quite evident from the fact that they began to put the 1873 agreement (which defined and delimited the northern boundary of Afghanistan with Russia) into practice by appointing Joint Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission in 1884. This boundary commission did not succeed in negotiating the boundary and also failed because of the Russian occupation of Panjdeh in 1885. The boundary commission was revived in 1885 and this commission demarcated the Afghan boundary from Zulfiqar in the extreme north-west point of Afghanistan to Khoja Saleh and to the Oxus. The boundary of north-eastern Afghanistan was not demarcated.

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16 Fraser-Tytler, n. 1, p. 157.

The protocol embodying the final settlement of the northern boundary of Afghanistan was signed on the 22 July 1887, in St Petersburg.

Yet the durability of this boundary settlement was in doubt. "Afghan rule on the northern watershed of the Hindu Kush was disliked and feared by the Turki-speaking inhabitants of this area. By the natural law of political gravitation, the two great empires were fated to be limitrophe, and whether we like it or not a partition of Afghanistan between Russia and Britain was inevitable".<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile Abdur Rehman brought Herat and Kandahar under his rule. The latter being occupied by Abdur Rehman by extending friendship to the British. The uprising in the eastern Afghanistan by Shinwaris and Ghilzais were severely dealt with and peace restored. Same was the case in the northern provinces and with Hazarahs in 1891.

In 1893 Sir Mortimer Durand led a mission to discuss the north-eastern boundary of Afghanistan with Russia. The results of the discussions led Abdur Rehman to agree to surrender certain areas across the Oxus when he was assured of an exchange of the outlying portion of Bukharan territory on the south bank of the Oxus. The province of Wakhan was also included in his dominion. The boundary to the east of lake Victoria was

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17 C.U. Aitchinson (Compiled by), A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, vol. XIII, containing the treaties Relating to Persia and Afghanistan (Calcutta, 1933).

delimited in 1895.

In 1893 Durand had successfully negotiated the boundary of Afghanistan with the British India. By the Agreement "the Amir renounced all claims to Chitral, Bajaur, Swat, Bunar, Dir, Chalas, Kurram and all other areas South-west of the line"<sup>18</sup>.

Between Afghanistan and British India there was a belt of tribal territory inhabited by the Pathan tribes. It covered an area of 25,000 miles. It was included in British India formed the seed bed of friction and misunderstanding.

Thus the boundaries of Afghanistan, by the end of the nineteenth century, had been demarcated. But they showed a peculiar feature of selection of tribes and tribal areas within the boundary. This feature is quite evident from the north-western boundary. The Afghan hold on the Sariks of Panjdeh was tenuous and in the ultimate settlement of the boundaries they did not find any place within Afghanistan.

The idea of 'buffer state' became a reality and its function corresponded with the principles set in effect, i.e., a stable state with a definite boundaries separating Russia and British India. The Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 settled all the minor boundary disputes of Afghanistan. Even then the tribal territory separating India from Afghanistan continued to remain a troubled spot.

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18 Arthur Swinson, n. 2, p. 240.

Even in the twentieth century the Afghan boundary with British India was much contended. However, the Afghan realisation of the British power enabled this boundary to be fairly stable, although the British had protested against Afghan involvement in the several uprisings in the North Western Frontier Province. The Third Afghan War in 1919 brought the complete independence to Afghanistan. But not until 1947 did Afghanistan raise the boundary dispute with Pakistan, the successor state as a result of the division of British India into India and Pakistan.

Thus, the historical analysis offers a ready explanation for the existing alignment of the boundaries of Afghanistan. It also explains the operations of factors, whose complexity and nature had given more importance to the political factors than the geographical considerations in the making of the boundaries of Afghanistan in the nineteenth century. By way of implications, it reveals the series of acts of the great powers, viz., Russia and Britain, compelled the disintegration of the Afghan empire and whose territories were shared by these powers. This unitary and arbitrary action clearly meant the division of the geographical units which collectively formed Afghanistan.

Hence the historical division of the Afghan empire, had made it loose to its identity and the Afghan empire faded from the political map. In its place came up Afghanistan of today, whose territorial limits were greatly restricted.

The division of the contiguous geographical region had

made the Afghan authority (in the early periods after definition of boundaries) over the marches vague and usually extra-legal. The vagueness was evident from the fact that the division of the territories had been made without impugning the theoretically legal status of the territories as a part of the Afghan state.

The great powers, it seems, had even before determining the territorial extent of Afghanistan, had conceived the limits and this was achieved by means of its instruments of persuasion and control of peripheral areas. But this process of adjusting the Afghan boundaries to their expanding frontiers had remained imperfect and as a result left minorities. These minorities were later used to justify territorial claims and boundary rectifications.

Finally the historical factors had given Afghanistan a distinct territorial concept which had, after the boundary definition, given Afghanistan a definite area to exercise its power and continue to function politically. This function was fully restored after the culmination of the Third Afghan War in 1919.

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## Chapter II

### THE PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE BOUNDARIES OF AFGHANISTAN

The boundaries of Afghanistan have been a constant source of irritation and discussion between Britain and the border neighbours (notably Russia and Persia) in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It was only in the last years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that the territorial limits of Afghanistan have been definitely established. The geographical characteristics of the boundaries of Afghanistan are best explained by the physical relief.

The north-eastern confines of Afghanistan or the extended arm of Afghanistan, consists of narrow valleys sheltered by giant spurs and high ridges. Between the vast elevated plateaus of the Pamirs and the comparatively low plains of the Chinese Turkistan, is an imposing mountain barrier of the Sarikol. The Sarikol bounds the eastern limits of the Pamirs. "The Meridional range of the Sarikol, .....is a typical mountain system consisting of two parallel ridges, of which the eastern is the dominating chain....."<sup>1</sup>

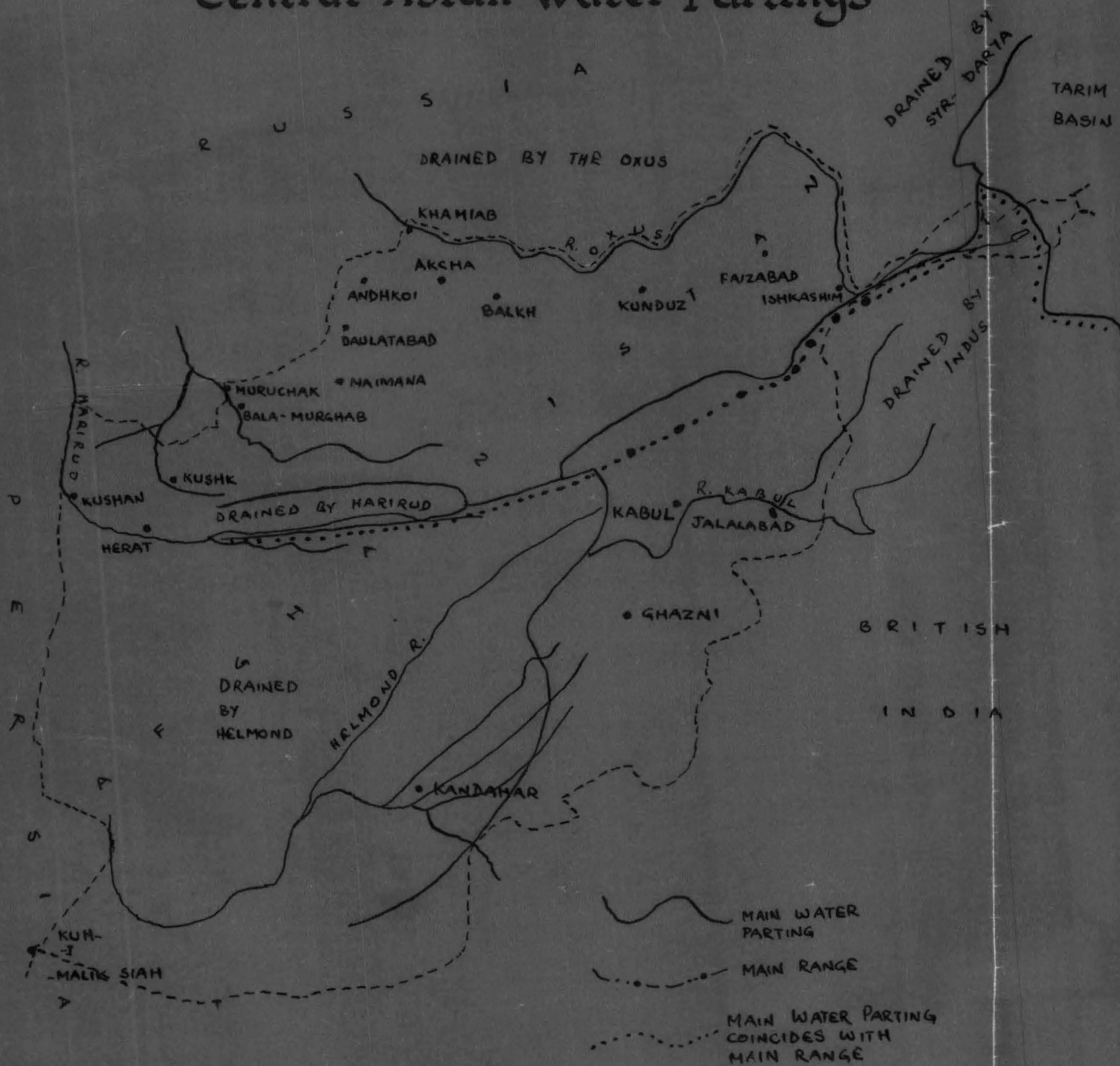
The Western ridge is "the true watershed between the Oxus and the Pacific and the eastern ridge now known as the Kashgar range through which the drainage of the western watershed forces its exist to the plains...."<sup>2</sup> The western ridge of the Sarikol is capped and pinnacled by the "highest mountain peaks of Asia,

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1 T.H. Holdich, "The Orographic Map of Afghanistan and Baluchistan", The Geographic Journal, vol. 16, No. 5, 1900, pp. 527-30.

2 T.H. Holdich, India (London, 1904), p. 64.

# Map of Afghanistan Central Asian Water Partings





north of the Himalayas<sup>3</sup>". Map (6) shows the major water partings and attempts to infer the probable alignment of the boundaries of Afghanistan with that of the watersheds. It also suggests that in the making of the boundaries, the essential factors of physical and other relevant factors and particularly the water partings have been given little or no consideration.

To the west of this, the configuration of the region is much similar to that of the Tibet plateau. This similarity is found in the elevated plateaus of the Pamirs, the plateau of Badakhshan and in the Tableland of the Afghan Turkistan. These plateaus merge with one another and finally with highlands of the northern Persia.

To the east of the western watershed is the eastern parallel ridge, which is, for all its functions, a subsidiary watershed.

In the southern extremity of the Sarikol circles round the Taghdumbash Pamirs, which abruptly halts the meridional strike of the Sarikol. The Sarikol system joins the Muztagh Ata on the east, thereby separating China from areas under Indian sphere of influence and merges into the Hindu Kush range on the west.

Following the meridional trend of the Sarikol, the river Oxus takes the long longitudinal trough from Chakmaktin to Ishakashim. The conjunction of the Sarikol mountain system with

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3 Ibid.

the Hindu Kush, and the axis of the Hindu Kush, forms the Southern Afghan boundary in the north-east. This strike is in the westerly direction and separates the headwaters of the Oxus, with that of the Indus. The river Oxus follows an uneven course of some 100 miles to a point where it overlooks Kala-Panja on the upper Oxus.

The Main range of the Hindu Kush changes its direction to southwest and continues for nearly 300 miles following an indented and irregular course to the neighbourhood of Bamian. Here the main range of Hindu Kush unites with the Kol-i-Baba mountain system.

The Hindu Kush mountain system divides Afghanistan into "...two unequal parts, about a third part lying to the north of the watershed. The country generally consists of narrow valleys sheltered by giant spurs and ridges of inferior elevation, which descend from the parent range. The latter is a double range pierced by streams which flow alternatively north and south and drain the trough and the ridges<sup>4</sup>".

Moreover, the Hindu Kush mountain chain, with a total length of about four hundred miles through its line of traverse, forms the main watershed between the Oxus and the Indus. Its altitude varies from 12,500 ft to 19,000 ft above sea level. "The remarkable fact that this gigantic watershed cradled among the highest mountains of the world, claims but one single place

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4 G.P. Tate, The Kingdom of Afghanistan: A Historical Sketch (Bombay, 1911), p. 2.

of special prominence. The Sad Istragh (Tirich-Mir) overlooking the Panja river is, as far as we know, the highest peak on the watershed<sup>5</sup>.

The elevation of Sad Istragh (Tirich-Mir) is about 24,170 feet above sea level. It becomes comparatively insignificant when compared to other snow covered peaks, which guard the upper reaches of Indus tributaries on the great spurs which are throw of southwards from the Hindu Kush.

The main axis of the Hindu Kush presents a flattish backed watershed which often falls to below 17,000 feet above sea level. Its surface is scarred by glacier and indented by lakes. Yet "there is no continuous contour line of water parting such as common to its spurs and in particular it is not so perfect a natural boundary as would be offered by a more definite mountainous backbone"<sup>6</sup>.

But "at the base of the mountains themselves, where the bold relief begins is always a piedmont-zone of hilly surface, but of gentler grade, at whose inner or upland edge, every phase of the historical movement receives a marked check. Here is a typical geographical boundary, physical and human. It shifts slightly in different periods... It is both ethnic and cultural boundary because at the rim of the mountains the geologic and economic character of the country changes. The expanding peoples of the plains, scatter their settlements along

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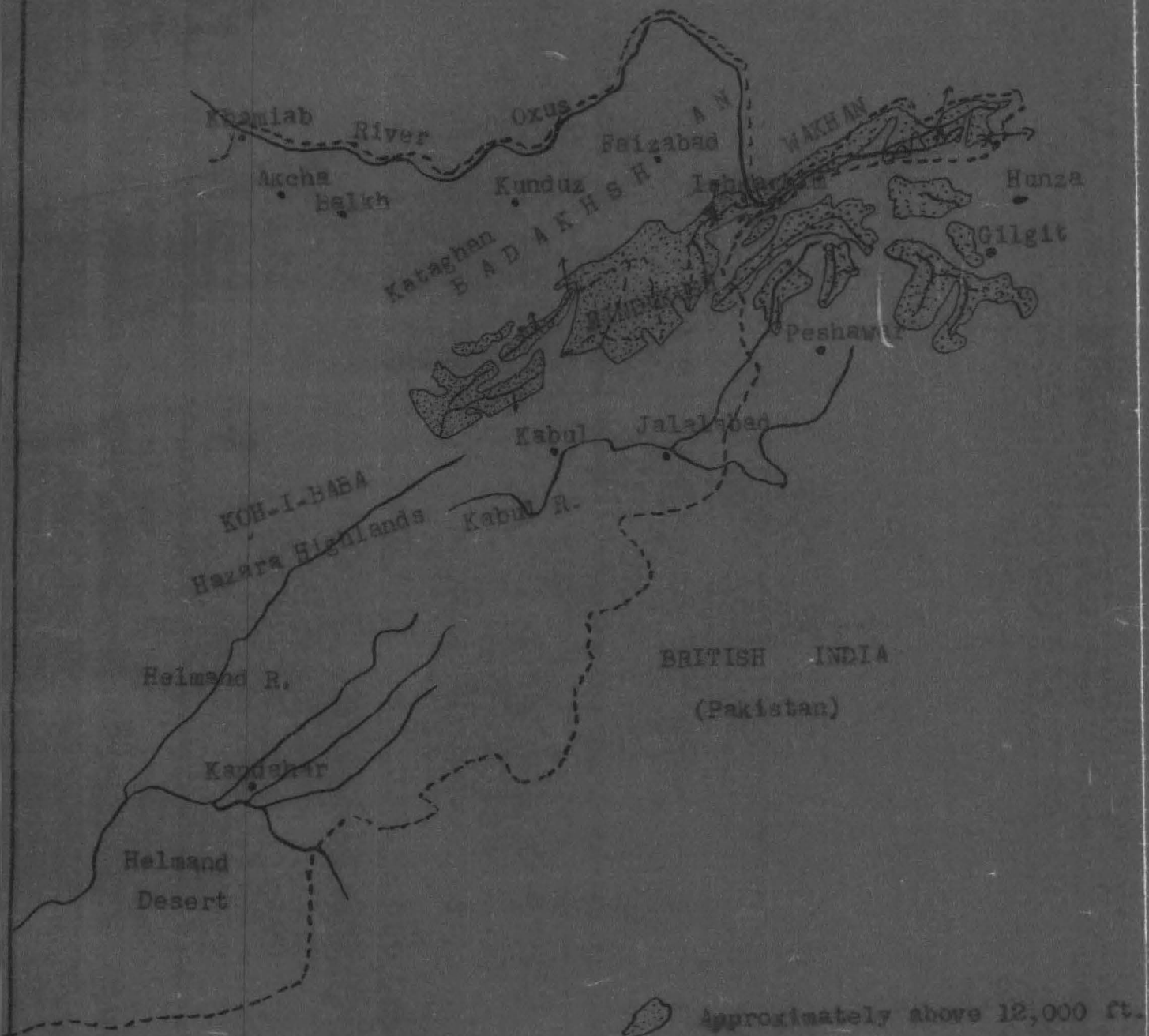
5        Holdich, n. 2, p. 65.

6        Ibid., p. 66.

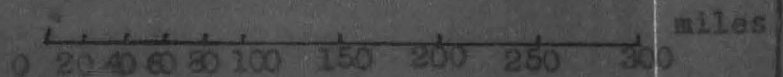
# Map of Afghanistan

## Orography of the Hindu-Kush Suggesting the Alignment with the Structural Boundary

RUSSIAN  
TURKISTAN



Scale 1" = 96 miles



the base of the mountains, and here fix their political frontier for a time, though later they may advance it to the crest of the ridge, in order to secure a more scientific boundary<sup>7</sup>".

It is this importance of the Hindu Kush mountain system which gives partially if not fully, the character of a natural boundary of Afghanistan. The Orographical map (7) of Hindu Kush indicates that it forms a natural boundary. For the Hindu Kush are pure a structural deviation of the plateaus in the south and and piedmont region of the north. It further indicates the subtle differences in the physical relief on both sides of the Hindu Kush, thereby it elucidates the causes which are primarily structural in character, of the relief.

The reason which the Hindu Kush mountain system lacks as effective natural boundary spring up from the presence of piedmont regions in the northern Afghanistan, that is the plan of Oxus. Although piedmont boundaries are most clearly defined in a point of race and civilization, they have easily accessible passes across the mountain massif. Kulm, Balkh and Kunduz, lying in the piedmont of northern Afghanistan, have nearly twenty and above passes which are easily accessible over the Hindu Kush and as for that over Pamirs also.

From a point, where the Sarikol divides the barrier between Russia and China and uniting with the Hindu Kush at a point where these two, the Sarikol and the Hindu Kush join the

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7 Ellen Semple Churchill, Influence of Geographic Environment (London, 1911), p. 525.

Muztagh barrier between India and China, ~~and~~ forms the southern boundary of Afghanistan. The territory which has between them is the south and upper tributaries of the Oxus (Panjap in the north). Hence Afghanistan stretches a long arm to the northeast from Badakhshan meeting China in extreme east and creating a narrow stretch of land between India and Russia. This stretch of land is known as Wakhan. It is important to note that from a point where the Hindu Kush overlooks Kala Panja on the Oxus, the northern spurs comprises the full width of Afghanistan in this north-eastern extremity. It is sometimes less than ten miles in length from summit to the base.

The salient feature of the region is the source of the Oxus river. The river Oxus is attributed with many initial sources and it is revealing that these initial sources are, more or less, in contact with ~~each~~ other.

Balkh and Mazar-i-Sharif are of strategic importance. This importance stems out from the fact that they dominate all communication routes from Badakhshan and Kabur as well as those leading southwards from the ferries and crossways of the Oxus at Kilif.

The Afghan Turkestan includes the plain between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush and latter's continuation westwards up to the Band-i-Turkestan. The western part of this region, lying in the northern slopes of the Koh-i-Turkestan, is an undulating down and dominated by the Chod. Through this western frontier the Kushk river runs northwards, as also the Murghab and its

affluents, Ghahar Shamba. All the streams afford good and easy highway after leaving the mountains. Eastwards of the approaches of western Afghan Turkestan the communication line is absent, only to reappear in the eastern Afghan Turkestan's province of Mazar-i-Sharif. From Mazar-i-Sharif to Kushk no practical route exists. But between Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul a route traverses the breadth of the Hindu Kush.

Facing the Russo-Afghan boundary between Mazar-i-Sharif and the Kushak river are the following Afghan towns, Balkh, Akcha, Andkui, Maimana, and Bala Murghab. All other important towns are located along the lines of drainage which do not reach the Oxus.

The Afghan boundary with Russia is defined by the river Oxus for nearly 650 miles. The boundary westwards passes through the cultivated lands of the Khamiab and Saxjol covered by the sand dunes of the Oxus to flat arid Turcoman Dasht and finally to Andhkoi.

The river Hari-Rud follows an extra-ordinary trough from Doalatyar to Kushan. All the rivers in the region except Hari Rud break through "northwards after the rising under the crest of the southern flank of the plateau and pass through the containing ridge on the northern side of it to the plains of the Oxus".

The Hari Rud crosses the southern flanking chain after

rising in the Hazara highlands, which (the Hazara highland) is an extension of the central plateau southwards from the Hindu Kush and Koh-i-Baba. "Here we have from Tibet to the passage of the Hari Rud, through the Paropamisus, an immense extent of mountain chain coincident with the main or central water - divide, sometimes it sinks to comparative insignificance. As the Muztaghit is mighty mass of impassable peaks and precipices, but as the Hindu Kush, it is distinctly secondary to its own magnificent offshoot, the Runder Range".

Beyond Koh-i-Baba, westwards of the Paropamisus, forms the southern wall of Ferozkhoi plateau. It is a scar or an edge of a highly elevated plain. To the south of the Central water divide there is a systematic folding of parallel flexures and apart from the main chain it is connected by transverse watersheds, which are strongly emphasized in the Koh-i-Sufed range south of the Hari Rud, and in the lower ridges which flank it.

Band-i-Turkestan lies on the northern offshoots of the central mass of mountains which separate the Oxus plain from the highlands of Afghanistan. The boundary passes through a point on the Kushk river which is 60 miles north of Herat and is separated from Herat by the Koh-i-Baba mountains.

Crossing the two affluents of the Murghab river, namely, Kushk and Kashan, the boundary reaches Zulfikar. The boundary



in this section marks the watershed between the Shorad and the Kushk river near Kara tepa, a dry and arid country where the town of Islim had acquired a strategic significance due to the existence of natural springs.

The great spurs of the Hindu Kush gradually peter out and near the northern approaches of Herat they completely disappear under the sloping glacier which descends towards the Turcoman desert. A broken chain of low hills links the southern watershed of the Hari Rud and the Hindu Kush the mountain system of Northern Persia.

The boundary of Afghanistan with Persia has a marked contrast in the relief. The boundary from Zulfikar upto northern Seistan traverses a lowland basin on whose eastern and western sides are uplands or plateaus. These elevated plateaus consist of an open undulating country of sandy origin and formation. They vary due to the width of gravel cover on the surface or flats and which are intersected by short ridges at intervals. The region has scattered peaks, of the southwesterly offshoots of the mountains which dominate the province of Herat south of the Hari Rud. This formation is usually denoted as desert. Its location in the immediate neighbourhood of the central watershed forms the natural boundary between Persia and Afghanistan. Incidentally the whole plateau section of this area, which includes plateaus in Persia and Afghanistan, are included in a general term of "Iranian plateau"<sup>10</sup>. But due to the inscription of

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10 W.B. Fisher (ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 1. The Land of Iran (Cambridge, 1968), p. 76.

political boundaries on this landscape the term has little or no importance. However, reviewing the general feature of this mass of Iranian plateau, there is no clear physical unity as such within this wider zone.

The marked feature of the relief which negates the grouping of plateaus or uplands is their (Plateaus') individual separation by topographical expense of differing width and lower but varied altitude. The intervening areas are plain in only that sense for, though most have a flat surface some are open and others basin like. The average elevation above sea level 3,000 feet. Southwards of it is the Helmand drainage basin of Siestan. The Afghan side of Siestan is developed but is irregular in form, as compared to Persian Siestan whose southern slopes form a natural boundary. The Afghan Seistan's northern rim is made up by the Hindu Kush ranges. "...the Helmand basin as a whole (defined in terms of total catchment) covers 135,140 square miles (350,000 square kilometers) little more than one tenth is Iranian"<sup>11</sup>.

The Afghan Seistan with relatively higher degree of slopes has very few areas of permanent water. The permanent water cover is found only in Hamun-i-Helmand (Hirmand) in the Iranian side of the boundary.

The source of the Helmand river lies in the highlands surrounding the Ko-i-Baba mountain system. The river Arghabdab

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11 Ibid., p. 76.

rising in the district of Malistan forms an important tributary of the Helmand.

The major fault which defines the western margin of the Helmand river runs from north to south, which indicated the correlation of the fault with the farthest east of Asia. It is enclosed at marked angles towards the foothills of the left zones.

Helmand river rises in the Kho-i-Baba ranges in the heart of Afghanistan. The main feeder stream is the Helmand (Hirmand) river which divides it into two major and several disbutaries at the Irano (Persia)-Afghanistan boundary.

The Seistan lakes are conditioned by the rivers of the surrounding country. Their extent is determined by the rate of evaporation and source of replenishment through the Shala Rud into Gaud-i-Zirreh. There are thus three permanent watersheds in Seistan. They are Hamun-i-Helmand (Hirmand) which is completely in Iran, Hamun-i-Sabari in the north and completely in Afghanistan and finally Hamun-i-Puzara which is partially in Afghanistan.

Regarding the supply of water to these lakes or HAMUNS and how they are formed, Honourable (Later Lord) G.N. Curzon states that "the modern Seistan may be said to comprise three main depressions.... The first of these depressions consists of the two fold lagoon formed by the Harut Rud and the Farrah Rud flowing from the north, and by the Helmand and the Khash or Lhusk Rud flowing from the south and east respectively. These two lakes or pools are connected by thick reeds called

the Naizer. In flood time, two lakes ordinarily distinct, unite their waters and the conjoint inundation pours over the Naizer into the second great depression, known by the generic title of Hamun or Expanse, which stretches southwards like a vast shallow <sup>12</sup> trough for many miles". The Helmand river's headwaters and drainage sump of the Gaudi-Zirreh in the southwestern Afghanistan divided from the rest of feature in Iran by the political boundary, has not only by passed topographical factors but also <sup>13</sup> created "an intricate problem of geopolitics".

Seistan area is geographically isolated in the remote corner of Afghanistan. The major handicap stems up from the fact that the isolation is combined with major communication routes which by pass it to the north and south. This is because of the disposition of the frontier line.

From the trijunction point of Koh-i-Malik-Siah, between Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Persia, the Afghan boundary crosses a desert country. A region dominated by extreme aridity is characterised by barrenness and gravel covered surface. This region is known as Registan, the great desert of Helmand. The only importance of the area lies in the presence of a single communication line from Koh-i-Malik-Siah to Nushki and thence to Quetta.

The boundary line traverses the crest of the Khwaja Amran Range. The rivers, Sharan and Gomal, divide the area

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12 Ibid., p. 76.

13 Ibid., p. 80.

between Chaman and Doamandi. The former area, characterised by extreme aridity, lacks in mountain passes. The southeastern corner has only one significant pass, the Bolan Pass. In Doamandi, the Gomal river forces its way through the mountain ranges to Dera Jat Plain. The pass thus formed constitutes a great trade route.

The Khwaja Amran range continues northward and merges with the Safed Koh. The boundary line thus bisects Waziristan and crosses the headwaters of the Tochi and the Khurram in the Safed Koh. The crest of Safed Koh upto Mount Sikram (15,620 ft above sea level) forms the boundary.

From Doamandi on the Fomal river, the boundary traverses through western Waziristan and across the headwaters of the Tochi river. It further cuts across the headwaters of the Khurram river and defines the southern watershed of the Khurram river.

Peiwar Kotal, lying in the Khurram route to Kabul, forms the point where Afghanistan and India come into direct contact. Upto Lundi Kotal the boundary passes through the Safed Koh watershed comprising of high and numerous mountain peaks.

The Kabul river forces its way through the Sulaiman range at Khyber. From Khyber the boundary follows an irregular way across the Momamand territory and nears the watershed of the Kunar river. Kunar Valley is well connected to Bajaur by several passes which also lead to Swat.

At the junction of the Bashgol and Chitral rivers the boundary of Afghanistan crosses the united streams and follows

a subsidiary spur from the river bank to the water parting that hedges in the Chitral Valley on the east and separates it from the territories of Dir and Bajaur. Once again it finds a fine natural landmark which extends southwest towards the Kabul Valley and presents all the requirement of a good frontier line.

From here the boundary line runs northeast across low mountains and then to the confused mass of mighty mountains which mark the junction of the Himalayas with the Hindu Kush. The boundary lies in a mountainous country, with desolate plains interspersed by fertile valleys, forms a natural barrier between the plains of India and the plateaus of Afghanistan.

From Nowshera to Chitral there exist a series of passes from the gateway of Malakand through the Lowari pass to Chitral. Water partings of the Chitral river from its important affluent called the Bashgol river in the eastern Afghanistan, forms a natural barrier on the northwest frontier of Kashmir.

Northwards to Dorah Pass the boundary is defined by the long spur of the Hindu Kush. From Chitral to Ishkashim in Badakshan the axis of the Hindu Kush forms the boundary upto Kala Panja, where the Afghan territory is as narrow as ten miles in width.

The area traversed by the boundary and the nature of the physical relief in this section of Afghan boundary suggest that from the Gomal river to Pamirs the boundary is exclusively of Afghanistan rather than of India.

Between this and the Indian frontier, lies a stretch of territory which is independent and acts as a buffer. This long

narrow frontier buffer covers an area of 25,000 square miles and is a rugged country with impassable mountains.

"The position of Kabul in the geography of Afghanistan assures its continuance as a great centre of trade while quite as much as it defines a point of strategic value; so that of all the many routes which cross our frontier and lead from High Asia to the plains of Indian sub-continent that which connects Kabul with the ancient Afghan City of Peshawar...is by far the most important"<sup>14</sup>.

The Kabul river valley, by far is the most important line of direct trade route from Peshawar. The main line of communication between Kabul and Peshawar is about 170 miles in length. The Kabul river valley is traversed by this route only for a distance of about 50 miles and at no given place it comes into direct contact with the river. This is best explained by the terrain over which the river flows. The Kabul route especially in the Mohamand country traverses through the series of rugged and impassable defiles.

From Lundi Kotal down the pass to Dakka the relief is even and thus to Jalalabad where the communication route scraps through the plains at the foot of the northern slopes of Safed Koh.

Unlike the passes located in the extreme north and in the southern boundaries, the Khyber group of passes afford easy

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14 Holdich, n. 1, p. 73.

communication. The importance of this group of passes is that they formed the primary line of approach to the northwest frontier of the Indian sub-continent in the early period when India was invaded by other countries.

The Kurram pass is separated from the Khyber pass by the Safed Koh range and its subsidiaries and offshoots. Between Peshawar and Kohat there is an extension of the full formation eastward towards the Indus. Round the source of this extension the frontier line was drawn in parallel to other frontiers, i.e. at the base of hills and the farthest limit of cultivable soil. This extension of hills is known as Jowaki Hill extension.

The Tochi Valley is also one of the important gateways. "The Tochi river is an affluent of the Kurram, which it joins not very far from their united junction with the Indus. It takes its rise in the western slopes of Waziristan mountains"<sup>15</sup>. It has a gradual slope towards the rugged mountain ridges and thereby intervening between the cultivated tracts of Sherania and the undulating plateau which lies eastwards and southwards of Ghazni.

The plateau of Afghanistan is rough and uneven. It is scored by mountain ranges which are interspersed by deep elevated plateaus and valleys in the Kohistan (the hill districts) of the north. These valleys widen out into broad areas towards Kandahar and Herat. In the south and the west they form Dasht.

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15      Ibid., p. 79.



The most important features of the Afghan relief is the Hindu Kush "itself but northern section of that great trans-continental watershed which extend from the Himalayas of the Pamirs across <sup>16</sup> Afghanistan and Persia to the Caspian".

The Kabul river forms the only passable communication route to the mountains of Kohistan and Kafiristan.

In the mountain fastness of Kafiristan, Hindu Kush bifurcates into two parallel ranges and forms two long narrow lateral valleys. The important rivers in this region are the Panjshir and the Ghorband which conjunctat Gharikar. Before the conjunction occurs they traverse northern and southern slopes of Koh Danah ranges.

The Gharikar, thus becomes an important pass from Turkistan into Afghanistan. Other passes are Khawal at the head Panjshir. The highest pass is at Kaoshan, 14,300 feet above sea level in the Hindu Kush mountain system. It forms the gateway to Kabul from High Asia. Kotal-i-Irak, lying west of Kabul and on the mainwatershed of Turkestan and Afghanistan, leads to the valley of Bamian. To the west of it and south of the Oxus the terrain is open and undulating upto Herat.

The boundaries of Afghanistan, at once show a contradiction with the physical setting of the country. Although it shows certain degree of similarity and coincidence with the physical landscape, the boundaries have largely overlooked and

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16 Ibid., p. 84.

have divided the geographical unity of the region. The variation between the demarcated and the geographical boundary, is also partially determined and is proportional to the greater or less completeness of the physical barrier between the various ethnic groups, who are collectively (within Afghanistan) known as Afghans. The effectiveness of the physical barrier were evident from the areas which were separated by people whose difference between each other was prominent and identical to that between the demarcated and the geographical boundary.

Afghan boundaries are political. This is mainly due to the fact that boundaries have separated more or less homogeneous areas, which has usually denser population. For example, Afghanistan's eastern boundary with British India clearly indicates this phenomena. The effectiveness of this boundary is directly dependent upon the physical character of the area. This effectiveness is evident from the frequent uprisings in the north-west frontier of British India. In the later stages, that is after 1947, the effectiveness of the physical character of boundary was brought to status quo with the political one by the initiation of settlement and changes in the civilisation which were affected by Pakistan, one of the successor State to British India.

Yet it can also be argued that the political boundary has been largely due to the physical features. This is evident from the eastern boundary of Afghanistan with British India. The eastern boundary of Afghanistan or the North West Frontier of British India, overlapped with the strategic frontier concept.

This was primarily due to the fact that this area provided easily accessible communication to the Indian sub-continent.

To leave their possession, the British found no definite or secure frontier barrier. They found the foothills of the northern Sulaiman ranges, which break up into several easily accessible passes as a favourable boundary, which overruled all the geographical factors and ultimately ending up as a political boundary. Moreover, the boundary concepts were strategically oriented and as far as the Afghanistan was concerned in this respect, it formed a part of the British empire. It was in these aspects again the physiography was relegated to secondary position and politics given primary considerations.

Thus the boundaries of Afghanistan indicate that their present alignment had been conditioned both by geographical and political factors. The complexity of determining the exactness of the territorial limits of the various peoples, and finally that of Afghanistan has been largely due to large transfer of people by the successive conquerors like Nadir Shah in the early eighteenth century. Added to this was the fluctuating territorial limits which at time coincided with physical features or at times divided them, resulted in the culmination of the boundaries of Afghanistan in the nineteenth century.

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## Chapter III

### RUSSO-AFGHANISTAN BOUNDARY

As a consequence of the territorial expansion and ultimate confrontation of Great Britain and Russia in Central Asia, the delimitation of Afghanistan's northern frontiers took place. There was a remarkable similarity of territorial possession between Afghanistan and Bokhara for the Amir of Bokhara controlled the states of Hissar, Kulab and Darwaz, corresponding to Amir of Kabul's control over Kunduz, Balkh and Badakhshan. The river Oxus was considered as the boundary between Bokhara and Kabul; and to which both Britain and Russia agreed to a considerable degree.

But what is evident is that both Russia and Britain, were bent upon creating "a Buffer Zone" or "Intermediary Zone". Bokhara, dependent upon Russia, served as an effective barrier, on the same line as Afghanistan served as an effective neutral zone for the British. Yet this arrangement came into much controversy when Bokhara was eventually incorporated to Russia and the only zone which separated these two powers in Central Asia was Afghanistan.

Russia was attempting to establish a natural frontier in her southern and eastern borders, and "...at every point along southern and eastern border Russia found herself face to face with British power and pretension. Time and again Russian advance called forth British fear and hostility, while British measures in turn aroused the Russians."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Warren B. Wash, Russia and the Soviet Union (Ann Arbor, 1958), p. 216.

Russia annexed Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand in 1868 and Bokhara in 1869; and created the new province of Russian Turkistan. This expansion became delicate as regards Afghanistan because of its geographical location and its uncertain boundaries.

Meanwhile the British had advanced into Trans-Indus region and by 1847, she had, for the first time, direct contact with Afghanistan's eastern frontier.

The concept of Neutral Zone which the British forwarded floundered, as there was no agreement about the territory and area involved. The British further proposed "Upper Oxus", which was south of Bokhara, as the limiting line which neither power--  
 [Russia and Britain including Afghanistan]--should permit its forces to cross... This would leave a large tract of country, apparently desert, and marked on the map as belonging to Khan of Khiva, between Afghanistan, and the territory already acquired by Russia, and if agreed to, remove all fear of future<sup>2</sup> dissension".

To this the Russians had not agreed as they expressed doubts about Khiva. They claimed that Khiva remained outside Afghan influence. They (Russians) instead, focussed their attention on the limits of Afghanistan's true northern frontier. At about the same time, Sher Ali emerged supreme from struggle for Kabul in 1869. He reasserted his authority on the country

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2 William Habberton, Anglo-Russian Relations Concerning Afghanistan 1837-1907 (Urbana, Illinois, 1937), p. 5.

lying between Hindu Kush and the river Oxus. It was in this context that the need for delimitation of frontiers, became partially essential. But the Russians refused to recognize the validity of Sher Ali's (Amir of Kabul) claim. Russians claimed that Bokhara had territories south of Oxus river. On the contrary the British opined that "Bokhara had no territory south of the Oxus save Kerki and Charjui farther west and that under Dost Mohamad Afghanistan possessed the whole tract of the country up to the Oxus. Not only did Sher Ali have a right to inherit all of that territory, but has now in effective control of it." Russia acknowledged Sher Ali's authority in Afghan Turkestan. But the main problem, began to unfold was that of Afghan territory, to the north-east of Badakhshan.

Prior to 1871, the Turcoman country formed the neutral zone between Afghanistan and Bokhara. The boundary of Turcoman country with Bokhara was clearly marked by the river Oxus. The Russian occupation of Khiva in 1871, disturbed this position of Turcoman country in relation to Afghanistan's northwestern boundary. This new factor brought latent claims during the final settlement of the boundary in 1886.

The Russian maps had shown Khoja Saleh as the western limit of Afghanistan's northern frontier and up to Badakhshan in the north-east. After which the maps had little information about northeastern part of Afghanistan. Commenting upon the

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3      G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontiers: A Study in the Imperial Problems (London, 1963), p. 168.

Russian position about the northern and north-eastern frontier of Afghanistan Lord Augustus Loftus brings an important geographical feature into consideration. This feature is inherent in all the sectors of Afghanistan's frontier with Russia. He stated that:

....in the first place, all the data we have to rely on respecting those regions are very vague and uncertain. The little native testimony, that there is, is unworthy of credence. The maps are problematic hypothetical and often contradictory. No country offers less resources to the inquirer into its historical and geographical conditions past or present.

In the second place, it had been agreed that General Kauffmann [the Governor of Russian Turkestan] whose position in contact with those countries enabled him throw much light upon these questions, should be commissioned to collect all the information possible respecting their political situation... [their extent and control]<sup>4</sup>..."

The problems created by inaccurate and hypothetical maps, have been largely due to the loose nature of the boundary definition. In the process of the definition of the Afghan boundaries with Russia, it is a common feature to note that the boundary has been defined without any detailed account of its course along the natural feature. The boundaries so defined had been particularly non-existent, although mapped. It was this difficulty which failed to corroborate the geographical factors with that of the boundary definition.

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4 Augustus Loftus, The Diplomatic Renainance, 2nd series (London, 1894), pp. 283-84.

An analysis of the boundary delimitation further indicates that, it was responsible for the actual loss of Afghanistan. It was largely due to the promulgation of the boundary treaties drawn up with little or no regard to the correctness of the definition. Added to this, the process of the definition of the boundary between one prerequisite to another has not even deemed it necessary to consider the fundamental principles of geographical knowledge and nomenclature. Thus aligning itself with the faulty delimitation, the northern boundaries of Afghanistan present an important factor of un-ascertainable previous jurisdiction of areas under dispute.

Russia denied all Afghan claim in the northeast because Afghanistan's northern frontier from Badakhshan stretched in wedge like form towards north, which came in contact with Kokand, Bokhara, and Kashgar; and this revealed that the most important geographical factor was the strategic connection of this sector (upper Oxus) with the tribal territories south of the Hindu Kush. The significance of the territory under dispute is explained by the fact that Badakhshan "...as unquestionably the most important of all those in Central Asia from a political point of view....possessed of it we [Russia] could command the way out of the Hindu Kush and the passes over this range to the valley of Konar where lie Chitral and Mastuj....<sup>5</sup>

With the annexation of Khiva, Russia began to contest

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5 Alder, n. 3, p. 172.



the towns of Aktcha, Seripol, Maimana, Chibagan and Andhkoi. Russian position in the northwest frontier was identical to the position adopted by them in the northeast.

The British with little knowledge about these far-off districts of Afghanistan relied more upon Russian data. The British proposed that

a) Badakhshan with the dependent districts of Wakhan from the Sarikol (Wood's Lake) on the east to the junction of the Kokcha river with the Oxus (Panjah), forming the northern boundary of the province through its extent;

b) Afghan Turkestan, comprising the districts of Kunduz, Khulm and Balkh, the northern boundary of which would be the line of the Oxus, from the junction of the Kokcha river to the post of Khosa Saleh, inclusive on the highroad from Bokhara to Balkh. No claim on the left bank of the Oxus below Khoja Saleh;

c) The internal districts of Aksha, Seripol, Maimana, Shibberjan and Andkoi, the latter being the extreme Afghan frontier territory in the northwest, the desert beyond belonging to the independent tribes of Turcomans.

Meanwhile, negotiations for the final delimitation of the northern frontiers of Afghanistan progressed in St. Petersburg. The contracting parties, Russia and Britain, were beset with contradictory boundary claims. Yet the boundary settlement

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6 G.P. Tate, The Kingdom of Afghanistan: An Historical Sketch (Bombay, 1911), p. 170.

was finally negotiated in 1873, which delimited the northern frontiers of Afghanistan with Russia (and Bokhara). The British and the Russians agreed that the line of Oxus, will be taken as the boundary between Afghan Turkistan and Bokhara. The agreement also stressed the need for early demarcation of the boundary between the two states. The acceptance of the river Oxus, as the boundary brought many complications; for one with the Oxus as the limit in the north, Afghanistan was deprived of territories on the other side of the river.

Amir Sher Ali's claim on Shignan as lying on the Cis-Oxus was contradictory because "...more than half the population of Shignan which was claimed by the Amir, as from ancient times a dependency and a feudatory of Badakhshan dwelt beyond the river."<sup>7</sup> Lack of geographical knowledge had brought great many problems. Describing the nature of these problems which were faced, Lord Salisbury stated that "...drawing lines upon maps where no human foot has ever trod...giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other...only hindered by small impediment that we never know exactly where those mountains and rivers and lakes were."<sup>8</sup>

The inherent weakness of the 1873 agreement and lack of precise geographical knowledge had led to arbitrary allocation of territories. The boundary claims were politically oriented

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7 Ibid., p. 183.

8 Ibid.

and hence the maps which designated such were doubtful of a correct geographical appraisal. This is clearly evident when Government of India followed a suggestion that the boundary was to follow the line of the main stream of the Oxus from Sirikul Lake (Wood's lake) on the Pamir plateau to the Kirki ferry. It is clear that if this view recognized the loss of territory to Afghanistan in the Oxus line in Kolab, as there were territories of Amir of Afghanistan on the other side of the river also. A new approach was adopted and instead of main line of the Oxus, a stream which flowed from Sirikul lake was taken, as it passes Wakhan up to the point where the range of the Hindu Kush meets the southern angle of Pamir steppe. Thus enabling and tempting Russia to expand as far as the Hindu Kush north of Chitral. Later, this stretch of the Upper Oxus boundary of Afghanistan with Russia, was defined to include Badakhshan and its dependent district of Wakhan from Sirikol (Wood's Lake) lake in the East to the junction of Kokcha river with the Oxus on the west. The line of Oxus or Panja formed the boundary line through the northern frontier on Upper Oxus region. The inclusion of Darwaz to Badakhshan, was ill-conceived and without any geographical basis. This however, was realized that Badakhshan did not reach the river Oxus in the north and Darwaz never (in modern times) belonged to Badakhshan.

But river Oxus has never been a political limit, except in the lower courses. The river runs in a wide open country and often forms a distinct boundary. Even in such situations,

the control of both the banks become a strategic necessity. Applying the same reasons to the upper Oxus region, one cannot overlook the topography, especially where the valleys are separated from one another by impassable places. In such a case rivers become the main communication routes and their function as a boundary is arbitrary and artificial.

Moreover, the authority of Amir of Kabul on these territories in the upper Oxus was weak. This was particularly evident in the northern and the north-eastern provinces of Afghanistan (as also in the eastern frontiers with British India. The lack of effective authority of Kabul over these peripheral provinces was largely due to the lack of communication facilities. The complexity of the physical features not only prevented the ease of communication but had also increased the independent streak among the tribes, which is common to every Afghan tribe. The explorations which were carried out to determine the spheres of influence of Russia and Afghanistan and revealed the ignorance in identifying the streams which have been defined in the 1873 agreement. Thereby it ignored the fundamental facts of political geography which deprived Afghanistan of territories on the Trans-Oxus. The 1873 boundary agreement, had in toto disregarded the prevalent features of the northern Marches of Afghanistan. It had not only fixed itself to divide the ethnological distribution of the region but had also deprived the traditional territorial limits of the tribes affected by the agreement. It had failed to consider the similarity of features which perhaps

could have deprived Afghanistan of territories, but the division of the area, neither justifies the territorial allocation nor does it correspond to any concept of boundary making, for it had departed from the prevalent concepts of boundary making. Accordingly, the river Oxus as the boundary was irrational and unjust. As far as principle of delimitation was concerned, there is absolutely no distinction between the case of Wakhan, Ishkashim, Gharan, Shignan and Roshan, for these districts are bisected by the Panja river. Afghanistan had the right to possess the Trans-Oxus territories and which can historically be proved.

A comparable situation existed in the north-western frontier of Afghanistan. Like the upper Oxus frontier, the north-western frontier of Afghanistan with Russia proved equally difficult and complex in character. Here again, the 1873 agreement failed to make any impression upon the colonial expansion of Russia. Though at the time of 1873 boundary agreement, the boundary settlement was to be between Bokhara and Afghanistan with Oxus as the boundary line, yet the frontier with Turcomans was ill-conceived, lacking in precise definition of terms and places. The boundary line was arbitrary without any conformity with the physical or cultural factors. In accordance with 1873 agreement, the North-Western boundary of Afghanistan was to commence from Khojah Saleh to Sarakh on the outer point of the Persian frontier district of Meshad. But "...lack of geographical information about the region rendered the treaty... [1873 agreement] ...nebulous and uncertain. It was acknowledged...

that...to be a line connecting Khojah Saleh with Persian frontier at Sarrakhs. Khoje Saleh has been mentioned in the 1873 treaty, and was there in defined as a 'post' on the Oxus. Sarrakhs was well known Persian term on the frontiers of Meshad district. The latter could be identified but meagre information which existed about the former could only have been derived from the records of Alexander Burne. It appeared as a fixed position in the map known as 'Walkers' Turkestan'. The original proposal for the delimitation of this line emanated from Russia.

The deterioration of internal political situation led the British to intervene in Afghanistan in 1879-80. Russia considered this more as a violation of the 1873 treaty and they insisted upon proper settlement of the upper Oxus region and also the north western frontier. They annexed Marv in 1884 and Panjpeh in 1885; and established themselves in Zulfikar pass, which completely disregarded the 1873 agreement. Russia had evidently absorbed Kara Kum desert which was inhabited by the Turcomans and "we...(the British)...have set about organizing...scientific frontier and the buffer frontier of Russia and Afghanistan has been co-jointly defined on the north-west." With Abdur Rahman as the Amir of Afghanistan, the boundaries of Afghanistan began to assume a concrete shape. A joint boundary commission was set

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9 T.H. Holdich, The Indian Border Land 1880-1900 (London, 1901), p. 235.

10 George Dobson, Russia's Railway Advance in Central Asia. Notes on a Journey from St. Petersburg to Samarkand (London, 1895), p. 47.

up to demarcate the north-western boundary of Afghanistan with Russia.

Of the problems, which beset the joint boundary commission, was the definition and exactness of the geographical location of places mentioned in the 1873 treaty. Russia's continued expansion in the Kara Kum desert region and attempts made by them to control strategic and geographically important region in the periphery, which incidentally encroached on the Afghan territories. For once the Russian attempt to control what was justified because the availability of water and the importance of communication was primary concern of the expansion. Geographically, the limited supply of water in the Kara Kum desert had asserted itself in the territorial claims. The north-western boundary of Afghanistan, thus possessing abundance of water supply, in the form of springs and rivers, had strategic importance. Moreover, the outer ranges of the Hindu Kush slowly and gradually disappeared in the desert of Kara Kum. This was the underlying significance which the boundary commission had to resolve, favourable both to Russia and Afghanistan.

Geographically, an effective control of the northern part, that is, the desert of Kara Kum, can be achieved only by the control of the mountains. Politically, this topographic set up was changed and the Russian expansion to control the outpost of the region was made by force. "The political boundary as a consequence, was completely different from the structural boundary".<sup>11</sup>

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11 The difference between the two lay essentially in the definition and the characteristics of the latter. The

Usually the boundary should have been at the breaking point between the ranges of Hindu Kush and the desert. This would have been ideal one. But at the same time the supply of water, which is essential for the desert of Kara Kum comes from these mountains and Russia's advance into this region comes out of geographical necessity.

The significant aspect of the north-west boundary springs up from established limits of pasture of Turcomans. The Turcomans of Panjdeh and Merv have recognized limits of their pasture, which is west of Kara Kum desert. The limits of pasture for the Turcomans living on the banks of Oxus, has been on the east. In between these two was a barren country. The evidence collected by the boundary commission shows that the Uzbegs of Maimanah have wells and pastures in south of the desert. The Russian claim to this region though in the form of protecting the interests of the Turcomans, in no way justifies the geographical continuity of the Maimanah claims.

As seen, Russian claims on territory has been more on the line of actual area covered by the Turcomans. The Turcomans tribe, nomadic nature, had their areas scattered. Their practice

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former depending upon the political situation, changes and is arbitrary between the negotiating powers, whereas the latter is distinct and is quite permanent. The structural boundary is that distinct feature which at its point indicates a culmination of a natural feature and the beginning of another, for example, the culmination of the Kara Kum desert in the mountains of the northern Afghanistan, is a distinct feature, where both the desert and the mountain show a distinct structural change.



of seasonal cultivation was scattered and enveloped area where Russia and Afghanistan made claims and counter-claims.

The eastern extremity of the north-western boundary was the problematic area. The dispute arose over the definition of Khoja Saleh. It was claimed that Khoja Salar was a post and not a district, however, Khoja Saleh was the district which belonged to Bokhara. At the same time the land between Dukchi and the Oxus was desert (with a mile wide strip of cultivated land along the Oxus, was inhabited by Ersari Turcomans) formed a part of the district of Akchak of Bokhara. However, the differences were settled, so that the boundary was said to be between Khamiab in Afghanistan and Posajha in Bokhara and was finally settled that boundary by in-between Islam in Afghanistan and Chahar Shanghirtio in Bokhara.

Thus the north-western boundary of Afghanistan was riddled with problem which has been peculiar in the nineteenth century. These problems were not probably anticipated in the 1873 treaty. Problems of irrigation and pasturage were as important to Russia as it was to British to demarcate the boundary for its own security in the Indian sub-continent<sup>12</sup>. The map (9) indicates the nature of the boundary problems and dispute. It has attempted to illustrate the claims and counter-claims and as a result, it is only suggestive that the dispute had been grossly exaggerated and has no semblance with the cultural factors of the area.

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12 Protocol number 6, Afghanistan deals exclusively on rights of irrigation and pasture. The commission which was appointed to inquire submitted a report, which is added in the appendix.

The status quo in the boundary negotiation in the upper Oxus region was broken in the 1880's. With Ab-dur Rahman, the boundary of the upper Oxus region became the primary concern. One important factor of importance was the efforts of Ab-dur Rahman to consolidate his rule over Afghanistan.

The imperfection of the frontier, brought fears of uprisings in the Cis-frontier and the "Bloody Assizes" carried out in Afghan Turkestan by Amir Ab-dur Rahman to suppress the rebellion in this region. It indicated the unpopularity of Afghan rule in the upper Oxus States. It was also evident that Afghan rule was not popular in Badakhshan, Roshan, Shignan, Wakhan and Darwaz, which had formed frontier of Afghanistan, according to 1873 boundary line.

It was during this period that Russia claimed land in Pamirs which belonged to no country, specifically. With the recognition of the underlying factor that Afghanistan and China had no specific boundary and the gap between the two existed which was included in the Russian claim.

Russia actually wanted to enclose Oxus watershed and to be in contact with the range forming the water partings from the river Indus. Russia with this claim confronted British, who later proposed that Afghan territory should be extended to eighty miles to meet Nezatash in Chinese Turkestan, as the natural limit of Afghanistan in the north-east.

In 1892-93, the Russians persisted on their previous claims. Keeping in view of the advantage of occupying areas

which they claimed, Russia penetrated up to the crest of the Khorabhort Pass leading across the Hindu Kush. Russia stationed itself at the Junction of Ak-su and Ak-baital rivers.

At this stage, Amir Ab-dur Rahman withdrew his occupation from north to Murghab and eastwards of the upper water of the river (Murgha) and confined himself to 73° E longitude. The significance of this is evident from the fact that "while retaining territory on the wrong side of the Oxus in the north, he (the Amir) had renounced pacts of Wakhan to which he was entitled by the 1873 line, and by so doing had laid bare the Dora Group of passes into Chitral west of Baroghil, which so far the Russians had been unable to approach."<sup>13</sup>

In 1893, Russia began to insist upon 1873 line in this region. Russia had also demanded the abandonment of Trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan by Afghanistan. They suggested that if this was done by Afghanistan, Bokhara will give up all Darwaz south of the river. They changed their frontier from the original Lake Victoria feeder of the Oxus by according to 1873 line but the line of the Wakhan Su to the south of it.

While the British were attempting to prevent Russia acquiring the northern slopes of Hindu Kush, they (the British) insisted upon the control of the longitudinal valleys of the north but not south of the mountains. They proposed to fix the

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13 T.H. Holdich, "The Orographic Map of Afghanistan and Baluchistan", The Geographic Journal, vol. 16, No. 5, 1900, p. 252.

Russian frontier as due east from Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier.

The deadlock which arose in the demarcation of the north-eastern boundary of Afghanistan, was best described by Dobson "...that part of the undefined Russo-Afghan frontier...is boarded by the disputed main stream or streams of the upper Oxus, and contested Khanates of Shignan and Wakhan etc. The misunderstanding arose through the utter ignorance of the country upon which the first Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873 as to this region of the frontier was based, and which is a clear proof that no lasting confidence in that part of Amir's boundaries with Russia can be felt until a joint commission has gained the necessary knowledge on the spot for the conclusion of the agreement, that cannot afterwards repudiate on the plea of ignorance"<sup>14</sup>.

Thus the whole question of Afghanistan's north eastern frontiers began to focus around the question of the exchange of Trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan for Cis-Oxus Darwaz. Despite all misunderstandings the 1873 line traversed through the Kocha<sup>K</sup> Junction along the Oxus to Lake Victoria, which was confirmed in 1895 and continued eastwards across the Pamirs to the Chinese frontier was taken as the boundary between Afghanistan and Russia in the Pamirs.

The settlement of the Pamir boundary in 1895 marked the southern limit of Russian advance in Central Asia. The successful

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14 Dobson, n. 10, pp. 44-45.

demarcation had not only defined the boundaries of Afghanistan but also it had been for the first time that Afghanistan had defined her own boundaries.

Thus the Afghan boundary with Russia was marked by inaccurate definition of terms and problematic maps. The difference which arose in the allocation of territories during the delimitation was characterised by the lack of specific geographical knowledge about the area. This had led to complete demarcation of the boundary (with the existing knowledge) and the negotiating powers had recommended and often forced the adjustment of the boundary, which was usually in their favour.

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## Chapter IV

### THE PERSO-AFGHAN BOUNDARY

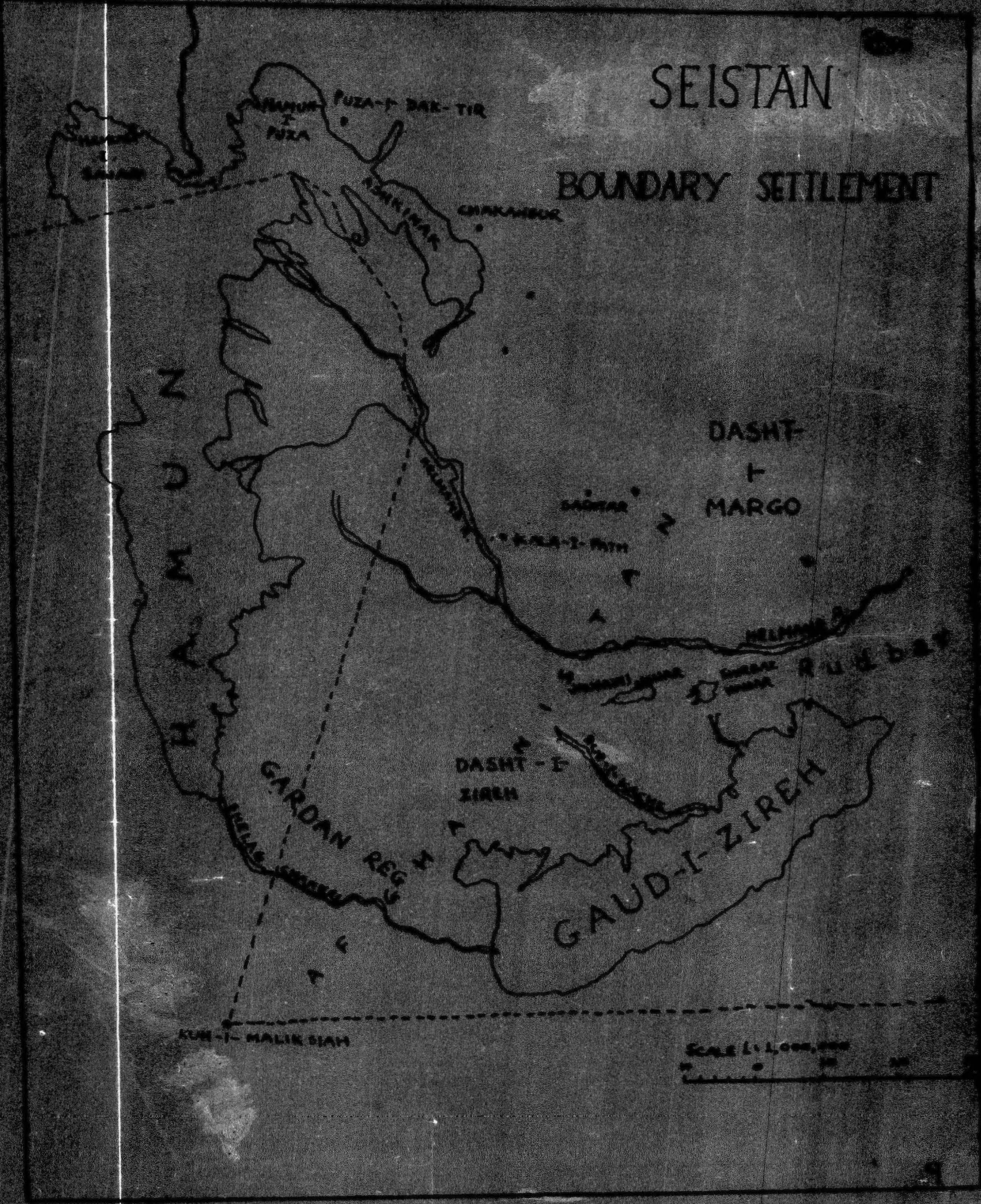
The western boundaries of Afghanistan with Persia (Iran) was comparatively stable. It had involved minimum of friction and the latent boundary disputes which arose, as a consequence of the settlement of other boundaries of Afghanistan, was resolved by British arbitration.

The primary cause of the boundary dispute between Afghanistan and Persia, lay essentially in the complex nature of the history of the region. Geographically, the region foremost of its part is a desert, the disputes centred themselves upon the important cities which were a part of the strategic communication route connecting Central Asia and Asia minor with the Indian sub-continent.

As it is known, the western Afghanistan, in the historical period, was often subjected to Persian rule. Moreover, the Russian expansion in Central Asia had deprived Persia of territories which they traditionally claimed and had affected an effective Persian control. This had led Persia to expand eastwards towards Afghanistan, so that the loss of territories in the north could be compensated. Yet, their expansion was doubly motivated, for they had also reasonably clear claims on the areas in the western Afghanistan. Another important element in the boundary claim and dispute, has been the vague nature of control or authority of either the Afghans or the Persians in western Afghanistan. This vagueness had added to the complexity of the boundary dispute between the two.

# SEISTAN

## BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT



Although the arid and semi-arid lands in the western Afghanistan have fairly defined the territorial limits of both Persia and Afghanistan by the structural break in the form of depression, the boundary was much debated. Geography of the region had offered little or no assistance at all in independent Afghanistan by Ahmed Shah Durrani in 1747, this part came under the Afghan rule. Since then it had remained under the Afghan rule. The Persians basing their claims on their historical authority, threatened several of the important towns in the western and southern Afghanistan. The Persian threat became a reality when, in the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was ripe with Civil War. Yet the strong British opposition to the Persian move, enabled Afghanistan to control effectively its peripheral areas adjoining Persia.

Among the disputes, the Hashtadan plains and the Seistan area were important. The Hari Rud, marked partly the Afghan boundary with Persia, from the trijunction point of Zulfiqar to Hashtadan plain. Hashtadan plain was bone of contention. The dispute was taken up with the British, who in 1888 appointed Major General Maclean to arbitrate. The arbitrational award determining the boundary limits. The following map (9) and 10a) indicates the nature of terrain under dispute. The map, on the outset reveals the continuity of a single physical feature, which has added to complexity of evolving a suitable boundary line between Afghanistan and Persia (Iran). It further suggest, what had been prevalent before the actual survey of the region by Captain McMahon in 1904-5, the difficulties



which will arise from the lack of accurate surveying and mapping of the region.

The Afghan boundary with Persia is nearly 700 miles. It starts from the trijunction point of Zulfiqar pass (where Persia, Russia and Afghanistan converge) extends up to the northern parts of the Seistan basin. From Seistan, it turns south-eastwards and east to Kuh-i-Malik-Siah, where Persia, Afghanistan and Baluchistan converge to form a trijunction point.

The Hari Rud forms the boundary line between Persia and Afghanistan. It demarcates the boundary from Zulfiqar pass to a point where the Hari Rud turns and follows a longitudinal trend to Zulfiqar. Below this point and up to the northern end of the Seistan basin, is the Hashtadan Plain. This plain became the bone of contention between the two. The dispute was referred to the British, who in 1888 appointed Major General C.S. Maclean to arbitrate. The arbitrational award had not only considered the geographical features of the area but had also attempted to delineate the boundary equable, fully considering in the process, the historical features. Yet the award had failed to determine the boundary between the Hashtadan plain and the Seistan basin, which was largely composed of arid desert and any habitation. This section, south of the Hashtadan plain was however settled in 1935, when General Fakhur-ud-Din Ahmed, a Turkish officer, was appointed to arbitrate the dispute. The award defined the boundary from Siah-Kuh in the vicinity of Bandan to a point in Hashtadan plain,

where General Maclean's award ended.

The Seistan boundary by far formed the grave problem, which both Afghanistan and Persia disputed. The claim was based on historical association of both Persia and Afghanistan on this area. Historically, the Seistan area was well under the Persian influence. The Persian authority was not to frequently challenge. But it started with the Ghilzais, who in their power swooped to conquer this area and had ultimately conquered Persia. But with their decline, the rise of Nadir Shah, brought this area under Persian rule, which was again deprived by the Afghans, with the rise of Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1747.

During the nineteenth century the civil war in Afghanistan had loosened the central authority on Seistan. This enabled the gradual encroachment of Persia, whose attempt was to begin its lost influence. However, the speedy restoration of internal order enabled Afghanistan to claim and dispute the boundary. Thus it resulted in the setting up of the arbitration, in 1872. Major General Sir Fredric Goldmid who was appointed as the arbitration had ~~divided~~ the Seistan area into.

- 1) Seistan proper and
- 2) Outer Seistan

and allocated territories for each of them. The award included the area south and east of the Helmand river to the Seistan proper and the narrow district along the right bank of the Helmand, stretching north to south, was included in the Outer

Seistan. Seistan proper was awarded to Persia and the Outer Seistan to Afghanistan.

Of the many defects of the award, the failure of considering the geographical factors was predominant. Also the area under dispute was hardly surveyed so that the maps which were produced in the award was faulty and inaccurate plus there large loopholes of unsurveyed tract. Moreover the award had failed to consider the changing nature of the Helmand river, which later proved to be the cause of dispute.

River Helmund began to change its course in 1896. The change had not only affected the alignment of the boundary but had also instigated the Persians to claim. Although the Persian and the Afghan Commissioners tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a settlement, they had to refer the dispute to the British for arbitration. Sir Henry McMahon was appointed as the arbitration, who later had ordered a new survey to be carried out. The survey had not only enabled the arbitration with more geographical details, but had also a decisive impact upon the territorial claims as a result of the change of course of the river Helmund.

The award laid down the boundary to follow a line starting from northward (Kuhak) to Mian Kangi, which continued northwards to the east of Shalagami and thence direct to Siah-Kuh. The boundary southwards of Kuhak was a straight line to Kuh-i-Malik Siah.

The McMahon award in 1904-5, thus favoured Afghanistan.

This last award not only revealed the geographical features of the erstwhile unexploited regions of Afghanistan but had also complied with geographical factors in the making of the boundaries of Afghanistan with Persia in this sector.

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## Chapter V

### AFGHANISTAN - BRITISH INDIA (PAKISTAN) BOUNDARY

With the settlement of the northern boundaries with Russia, there remained for Afghanistan the problem of finding out a political solution, in the form of boundaries, south of the Hindu Kush, i.e., the eastern boundary of Afghanistan with British India. "Afghanistan came under the effective and efficient rule of Ab-dur Rahman in 1880 and it took a concrete shape of stability. This is where the importance of fixing up of a definite boundary sprang up. "Amir Ab-dur Rahman Khan had already inquired from the British as to the extent and territorial limits of his dominion."<sup>1</sup>

The boundary settlement with Russia and Persia (Iran) had left only the southern and eastern frontiers, where for 1,200 miles from Pamirs to the Persian desert, the Afghan territories abutted on areas which were either under the direct administration or under the suzerainty of the British. Meanwhile the Treaty of Gandamak which was concluded before the Second Afghan War in 1880 was ratified by Amir Ab-dur Rahman Khan. By this treaty, the British came into possession of the districts of Kurram, Pishin and Sibi. This treaty had also placed the boundary between Afghanistan and the British Baluchistan at the foot of Khojak mountains. All along the eastern

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1 Dr Abdul Ghani, A Review of the Political Situation in Central Asia (Lahore), p. 35.

Also Mir Munshi Sultan Mohammad Khan (ed), The Life of Abdur Rehman, Amir of Afghanistan, vol. 1 (London, 1900), p. 193.

frontiers, the Amir had decisive influence upon the independent tribes. These independent tribes believed that the Durand Agreement was to partition their traditional territorial limits. This was where the Afghan influence was utilised to exploit the belief of the tribes and to justify their territorial claims.

The independent tribes occupying the eastern fringe of Afghanistan became the target of the Afghans. "The natural outlet for the superabundant energy of the Afghan army is on the frontiers of Afghanistan"<sup>2</sup>. The independent tribes had never been subdued. These tribes comprise of Kafirs, Mohamds, Bajouris, Swatis, Afridis and Waziris and all of them excepting the Kafirs approached the Amir of Afghanistan for arbitration in their disputes with each other. This direct influence of the Amir of Afghanistan with the independent tribes strained the relations of Afghanistan with the British, who naturally thought of establishing a boundary between Afghanistan and the independent tribes. The need for such a boundary was not only to define the boundary between the British India and Afghanistan but also to establish a second line of defence against a possible Russian attack. So much so, the British began to extend their administration to the tribal areas which were immediate to their administrative boundary. This action brought forth Afghan antagonism as the Amir was anxious to include under his rule as much as possible of the territories occupied by the Pathan tribes.

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2 Thomas H. Holdich, The Indian Border Lands 1880-1900 (London, 1901), p. 226.

The extension of railway communication to New Chaman across the Khojak Hills in the south-eastern frontiers of Afghanistan was considered as a British attempt to extend their frontier arbitrarily.<sup>3</sup>

It was this tribal region in the northwest frontier of India which provoked undue controversy between Afghanistan and British India (the problem is still the focus of dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan). The British had claimed that Chitral, Bajaur and Swat were no part of Afghan dominion and this was firmly conveyed to Dost Mohammad Khan in 1861 and again to Sher Ali in 1877. In retaliation, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan annexed Kunar to his dominion and seized Asmer so that Chitral, Jandol and other districts of Bajaur could come under the sway of Afghanistan. At the same time Amir Abdur Rahman claimed Kurram Valley in the south. In view of this development, the British nominated Sir Mortimer Durand as an envoy to negotiate the boundary between Afghanistan and British India. During these negotiations Amir Abdur Rahman agreed to surrender the Trans-Oxus territories of Roshan and Shignan to Russia. The necessity of reaching an agreement on the Afghan-British tribal frontier was stressed previously by Durand in 1893 at Kabul. The Amir was persuaded to relinquish his claim on Chitral and Dardistan and confirmed the treaty of Gandamak.

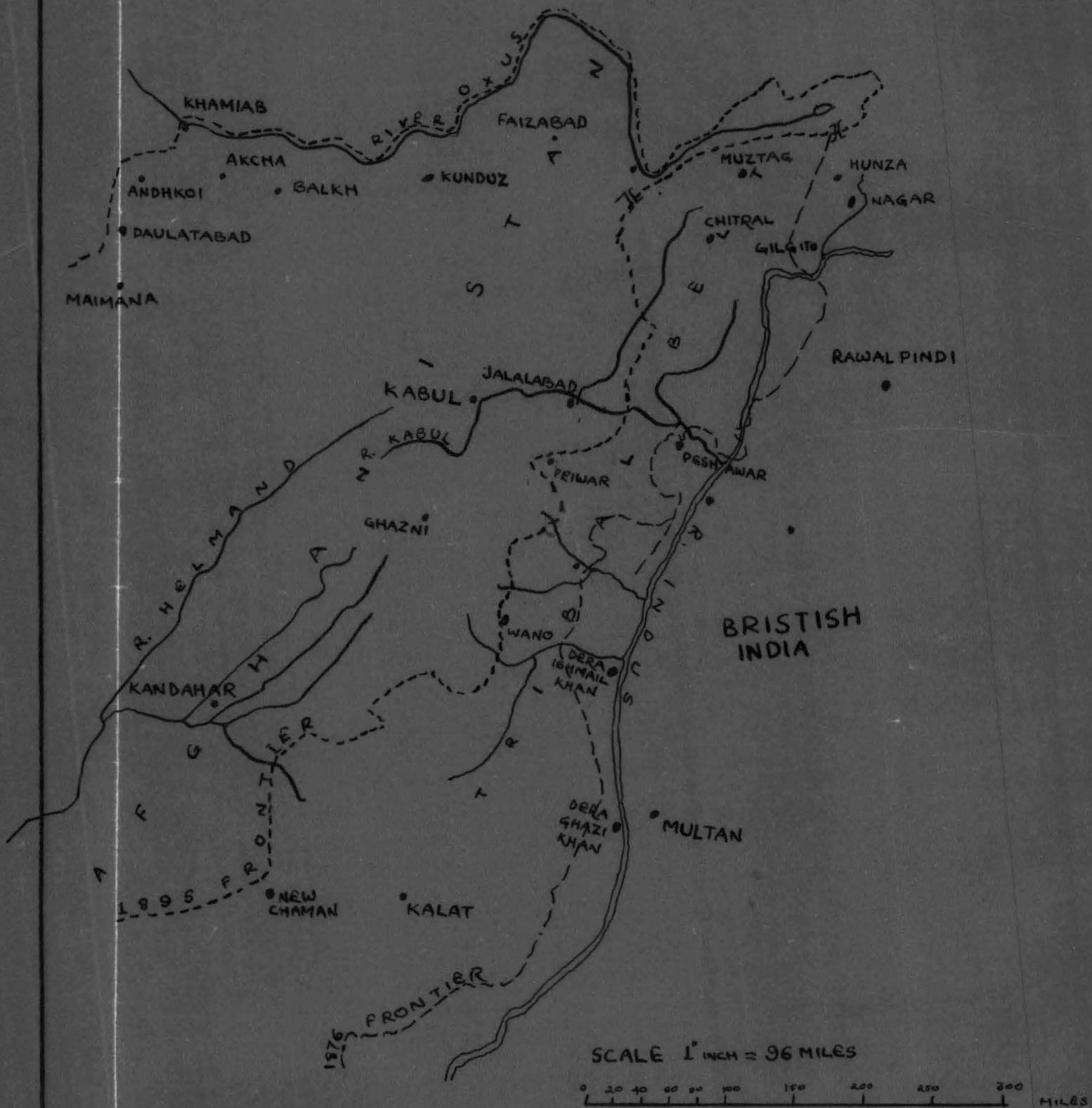
The efforts of Sir Mortimer Durand culminated in reaching

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3 Mir Munshi Sultan Mohammad Khan, n. 1, vol. 2, p. 154.

# Map of Afghanistan Old & New Frontiers with British India

R U S S I A





an agreement and was signed in 1895. The boundary line between Afghanistan and British India came to be known as the Durand Line. The agreement delineated the boundary from Chitral and Baroghil Pass upto Peshawar. It was then continued upto Koh-i-Malik Siah, a point where Persia, Afghanistan and Baluchistan converge. The boundary thus brought Kafiristan, Asmer, Mohammand of Lalpura and a part of Waziristan under Afghan domination while Afghanistan renounced her claims on New Chaman, Chageh,<sup>4</sup> the greater part of Waziristan. Buland Khel, Kurram, Afridi, Bajaur, Swat, Buner, Dir, Chilas and Chitral. The accompanying map (10) shows the difference between the frontier line adopted by the British in 1876 and with the demarcated boundary of Afghanistan in 1895. The area between the two frontier lines of 1876 and 1895, occupied by the Pathan tribes, became the seed bed of distrust and dissension between the Afghans and the British. The 1876 frontier line was used as the administrative frontier until the tribal belt was incorporated into the North West Frontier Province.

However, soon after the boundary agreement, the Afghans occupied Dir-Chitral road and Nasrat in southern Chitral. They incited (as they did in the rest of the tribal areas) uprisings in lower Kafiristan. The British, however, in view of the strategic location of Chitral in the defense framework of India, refused to recognise the law of political and strategic developments and in lieu forced a physical occupation of the natural

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4 Alastair Lamb, The Asian Frontiers (London, 1963), p. 86.

frontiers. This failure of recognition was in itself the inherent defect of the Durand Line.

The settlement of the southern and eastern frontiers of Afghanistan theoretically defined the limits of the Afghan suzerainty, although the disputes arising from the boundary settlement, both major and minor disputes, were left status quo till the British were in power in the Indian sub-continent. But "the process of boundary making gave to the ruling Afghan dynasty during the nineteenth century control over territory and population which in other circumstances might never have acquired". This was evident from the fact that British boundary commission, while implementing the Durand Agreement, left a chunk of territory to be included in the Amir's dominion while demarcating the boundary between Baluchistan and Persia. This aspect otherwise would have have deprived the Amir of the Baluchi tribal groups.

Although the Durand Line was the best (if one considers the circumstances under which the treaty was negotiated) but it had "...few advantages and many defects"<sup>5</sup>. The Durand Line formed the source of dissension and the inclusion of the hill tribes to the British side of the boundary, brought greater resentment of the Afghans against the British. The Amir expressed this in no ambiguous terms in his letter to Lord Landsdown when he stated "if you should cut them of my dominion they will

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5 Ibid., p. 86.

never be of any use to you (the British) nor to me.... As long as your government is strong and at peace you will be able to keep them quiet by a strong hand, but if at any time a foreign country appears on the borders of India these frontier tribes will be your worst enemies<sup>6</sup>". The misgivings of the Amir became true when the British undertook punitive expeditions to Waziristan, Tirah etc. in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

The Durand Line delimited part of the 1,200 mile long boundary between Afghanistan with British India. The Afghan boundary with Baluchistan including the British Baluchistan and the hill districts of the extreme north were delimited on the basis of territorial limits. But during the demarcation of this sector of the boundary of Afghanistan, it was found that Afghan claims have been grossly exaggerated. Their claim of suzerainty over parts of Baluchistan were based on historical factors but the independent characteristics of the tribes of Baluchistan have contradicted it. The Afghan tribes had a complete occupation of Baluchistan several times in the course of the history. Their occupation was often interrupted by conquering tribes which selected this particular area as a line of advancement for their ultimate invasion of the Indian sub-continent. The Baluchi tribes had, as a consequence aligned themselves with the conquering Afghan tribes and had often revolted, when the Afghan rule was weak and ineffective.

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6 James W. Span, The Pathan Borderland (London, 1963), p. 117.

The Afghans, basing their claim on their sporadic rule over Baluchistan, could not affect a probable adjustment to the boundary because of the Baluchi tribes, who had always expressed their independence of alien rule.

Thus the Afghan boundary with Baluchistan starts from the trijunction point of Koh-i-Malik Siah to the borders of Quetta District, thereby intersecting the great Helmand desert of Registan exactly at a point fifty miles south of the river Helmund. The boundary also defines the southern watershed of the river.

But the Afghan boundary with British India indicates clearly the British attempt to control the strategic places like that of Wana in Baluchistan. Wana, a desolate plain, is in the south of Gomal river at the south-western corner of Waziristan in Baluchistan. "It is conveniently placed for dominating the Sulaiman Khol and other strongholds of the Ghilzai tribes, and it absolutely commands the greatest high hoad for trade between Ghazni and India". Thus the retention of the strategically important places by the British along the frontier had been the primary cause of the boundary disputes. Also it had brought basic contradictions within the British as they failed to understand the implications of the Durand agreement. "The difficulty in demarcation of the Durand Line between the Indian Empire and Afghanistan arose from the various

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7 Holdich, n. 2, p. 234.

interpretations of the ambiguous terms in the proviso that the boundary should be drawn along the foot of hills<sup>8</sup>".

The demarcation of the boundary did not anticipate partitioning of the area which was geographically homogenous. It did not anticipate in dividing a country inhabited by one particular race. Above all the purpose of delimitation and that of demarcation, i.e., to minimise the disturbances in the frontier region, was not, in itself, achieved.

The demarcation of the boundary failed to make permanent impression upon the natural landscape of the border region, for the boundary was almost forced upon the Afghans. The British, after demarcating the Afghan boundary with Russia, were in haste to complete the definition and demarcation of the boundaries of Afghanistan with them. This was partly attributed to the creation of an effective line of defence against the invasion of the Indian sub-continent from the north-west. However, the eastern boundary of Afghanistan seems to have been a source of irritation; for "of all the source of irritation boundaries seems to be prolific,...it was a boundary (nonetheless) that started Umra Khan on his quest of Chitral, it was a boundary which set all the north-west frontier in a blaze latterly. And yet all this boundary making has been in the interests of peace alone. The want of these boundaries would more surely have led to widespread, more disastrous, war than the making of them and

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8 C.B. Fawcett, Frontiers: A Study in Political Geography (Oxford, 1921), p. 70.

it seems of all things most extra-ordinary that efforts honestly made in the interests of peace and good government should not be possible without bringing great countries into War<sup>9</sup>".

The error committed by the British in the early part of the negotiations seemed to have persisted. The error was that during the negotiations no survey officer was permitted to accompany, for "no one was better aware than the Amir, that the road from Peshawar to Kabul had been thoroughly surveyed and indeed far beyond it"<sup>10</sup>. This omission manifested itself during the demarcation of the boundary.

In order to circumvent this, the British had approached the problem in the form of creating a scientific frontier. The scientific frontier was to traverse the Kabul-Kandahar line. This was also to pressurise the Amir to limit his claims and to forestall any move which he may take to circumvent the Kabul agreement. It was this strategical and geographical factor which made the British to implement the Durand Agreement. Nevertheless, the basic objective of the definition of Afghan boundaries had been to restrict the Russian expansionism and creating lines of defensive position against possible Russian invasion of India. Accordingly, the British had created the scientific frontier to include the tribal territories. Thus keeping in view the defence of India, the British had created

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9 T.H. Holdich, The Use of Practical Geography as Illustrated by Recent Frontier Operation, The Geographic Journal, vol. 13(5), 1899, p. 470.

10 Holdich, n. 2, p. 228.

the triple frontier. They were (1) the northern boundary of Afghanistan; (2) the Durand Line and (3) the administrative boundary. Between (2) and (3) was the tribal belt, the hot bed of Afghan resentment against the British. But this frontier of tribal belt between Afghanistan and British India "...is not sound from geographical point of view, that it, it is not a frontier defined by watershed or big rivers. The only natural frontier to the westwards is the waterless desert of eastern Baluchistan and the highest ridges of some of the western Himalaya in the far north. From racial point of view frontier politics are a jumble of interests."

The Durand Agreement was in itself vague and it was difficult to earmark the territorial limits. "The Durand Line--(was)--not conterminous with the administrative frontier"<sup>12</sup>. The Durand Agreement had clearly indicated that the tribal area between the Durand Line and the British administrative frontier was to be under the British influence. Yet the problem of the tribal territory could have been settled. For, the British could have abandoned any further incursions into the tribal territory and the British withheld the extension of direct administration to the foothills.

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11 E. Howard, "India's Defence as an Imperial Problem", Journal of Central Asian Society, vol. 13, part 2, 1926, p. 112.

12 W.K. Fraser Tytler (Revised by M.C. Gillet), Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia (London, 1967), p. 293.

"This was the Durand Line solution. It created an Afghan boundary, which for much of its length, was unadministered, where tribal disturbances called for punitive campaigns. It left large Pathan population for Afghanistan"<sup>13</sup>.

But evidently what the Durand Line had overlooked is that "for the settlement of new frontier lines, the problems are different and call for a complex solution, considering frontiers not only as an accomplished fact but also the frontier in the process of making and the ease with which it can be surveyed and marked out upon the ground becomes an important fact"<sup>14</sup>.

The British concept of the Durand Line was strategically oriented. To the east of the line was the administrative boundary corresponding to it on the Afghan side was the Russo-Afghan boundary. This alignment of boundaries perhaps could not be considered in isolation, for "major southward deflection of Russo-Afghan boundary, for example, would inevitably produce serious consequences. The British thought as to the desirability of a northern or westwards deflection of the Durand Line.

But the Durand Line clearly indicates that the history of the region as an important factor in determining its course. This historical factor has "sometimes even superceded physio-

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13 Alastair Lamb, n. 4, p. 89.

14 Alastair Lamb, "The Geography of International Frontiers of the British Empire", Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, vol. 53, 1966, p. 253.



graphic factor...(which)...always interacting with all other factors, those working for persistence as well as those working for change"<sup>15</sup>. For example, the Kunar has long remained strategically important as a gateway from the conquest of the plains of Indus - (In between the highlands of Afghanistan and the Indus plains was the country inhabited by the tribes who were subjugated by the invading armies). It connects Badakhshan and the Oxus in the northern frontiers of Afghanistan with the Indus. Thus its importance was well recognised by the British and in their attempt to decide upon the most appropriate alignment for their border, experimented with numerous possibilities. Hence "the Durand Line is very much a compromising solution based upon British strategic and administrative experience and not upon treaties and customs"<sup>16</sup>.

The Afghan resentment of the Durand Line largely rested on the fact that their country, whose territory shrank due to colonially expanding countries of the nineteenth century, did not benefit by the Durand Line. They claimed that:

- 1) Durand Line was signed under duress and imposed by a military force on Afghanistan; and
- 2) The question of Pakhthun territory always remained under dispute. <sup>17</sup>

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15 Eric Fisher, "On Boundaries", The World Politics, vol. 1, No. 2, 1949, pp. 196-222.

16 Alastair Lamb, n. 14, p. 248.

17 Pakhthunistan - The Khyber Passes - The focus of the new State of Pakhthunistan, p. 70.

But despite the boundary line, the Afghan influence (on the much-disputed tribal belt along the border) had significant effect on the tribes. The Afghan's hold on the Trans-border tribes was perhaps a hedge of defence against possible British threat.

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## CONCLUSION

The boundaries of Afghanistan are in contradiction with the boundary concepts prevalent in the nineteenth century. The boundary concepts had laid great importance to the physical and human aspects of the region where the boundary was to be drawn. But the boundaries of Afghanistan show a digression <sup>from</sup> of these concepts and indicate the overriding importance of the political factors of the nineteenth century. The political factors had not only led to the arbitrary definition of the boundaries of Afghanistan but also brought out a basic and fundamental difference with the physiographical and cultural factors of the frontiers of Afghanistan. The lack of orientation of the boundaries with external morphology of the region had brought lack of functional qualification to the boundaries, other than what has been arbitrarily defined to act as a buffer between Russia and British India. This lack of functional definition had brought out the latent territorial disputes to the fore and where Afghanistan cannot effectively redraw the boundaries, it had significantly brought out its feeling of frustration over its boundaries in other areas, especially in the case of the boundary with British India and later with Pakistan, over the tribal territories.

The wide dissimilarity between the historical and the political boundaries of Afghanistan have clearly indicated that the core of the Afghanistan empire, established by Ahmad Shah Durrani formed the basis of the nineteenth century political boundary: and that the petty states in the periphery of the

Afghan 'Core' who owed doubtful allegiance to the Afghan empire were the territories which brought significant change in the allocation of territories and ultimately in the political boundaries of Afghanistan. Although it seems that the Afghans' frustration in the north may not be real but it is justified with regard to its eastern frontier with British India (later Pakistan). But even this justification becomes doubtful because the Afghan control of the tribal territory in the eastern frontiers has been only nominal or even non-existent.

Nevertheless, the definition of the Afghan boundaries in the nineteenth century, had made Afghanistan a nation state. It had brought a distinct politico-territorial forms which otherwise would have been difficult. It became a geographical feature with a definite shape and size. It had brought a coherent unity and certain degree of homogeneity. It had resulted in the removal of heterogenetic characteristics of the frontier regions and the introduction of the contiguity of people in the frontier areas. It has brought forth the difficulties of a single racial group on both sides of the boundary and had effected a transfer of population within the boundaries. It has eliminated the force of inertia and made Afghanistan an effective territorial organization.

But with all the above advantages of the boundaries, the boundaries of Afghanistan are antecedent boundaries. They were artificial and arbitrary; and were drawn on the conference table by those whose geographical background was limited in

definition of few place names. The alternative for such antecedent boundaries was the possibility of deferment of delimitation until the demarcation had taken place. The Afghan boundaries show that the loss of traditional territories had been greater due to the delimitation and demarcation rather than due to military conquest by Russia and Britain of Afghan territory in Central Asia. The loss was also due to large transfer of territories during demarcation, especially in the north-west and the northern frontiers of Afghanistan with Russia. As a result, the boundaries of Afghanistan reveal the predominant role of the forces of conflict and the duality of their functions in maintaining a balance between Russia and Britain in Central Asia.

But the boundaries have given a clear indication of the extent of real sovereignty of Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan had remained a mere spectator or a passive party during the negotiation of its boundaries by imperial powers, the definition of its boundaries have brought a coherent unity among the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

The boundaries of Afghanistan with Russia, Persia and British India, had all been equally troublesome. But by far its eastern and southern borders are distinct from the rest mainly due to the fact that the Afghans were politically and militarily pressurized to accept Durand Line as a boundary between British India and Afghanistan, the Durand Line was a topographically convenient foothill boundary which divides the

ethnic and tribal divisions. It has brought a political severance of the Pathan tribes inhabiting either side of the boundary. It was this singular feature that had bitterly embroiled the governments of Afghanistan and British India (after 1947, Pakistan).

Though the fixing of the Durand Line was one result of Second Afghan War, it cannot be said to be arbitrary. It has, throughout, attempted to follow the tribal boundaries. The boundary line had separated those tribes whose foci was in Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Tank and Quetta, from those whose economic link was with Khurasan, Kabul, Ghazni and Kandahar. Only the Mohamand tribes seems to be cut across especially in the section from Lalpura to Jallalabad rather than one of Peshawar. These sectors were excluded in the Afghan territory. Moreover, Amir Abdur Rahman had whole-heartedly approved this settlement, although he had shown certain ambivalences during the tribal troubles.

The validity of the Durand Line is justified by the historical fact that even before the creation of the Afghan state by Ahmad Shah Durrani, the western Afghans and the eastern Afghans had different political alignments. The Abdalis and the Ghilzais, chief among the western Afghans were largely influenced by Persia, whereas the eastern Afghans comprising of Yusufzais, Mohamands, Afridis etc. were subjects of Mughal India and their successors. It was to stabilize this distinction which had historical and economic roots that the Durand Line justifies itself.

The Afghan boundary with Iran and the north-western boundary with Russia was also a political boundary. However, the longest part of the Afghan boundary with Russia is natural for it follows the river Oxus or Amu Darya. Similar is the case with the central parts of the eastern and the south-eastern natural boundaries. These are also true frontier areas for the Sulaiman mountains are linked to the Hindu Kush mountain system.

The internal boundaries of Afghanistan, the tribal boundaries, had significant impact upon its international boundaries. The most important one is the Hindu Kush, which divides the country into two unequal halves. In the north the ranges of Hindu Kush separate the Kabul valley from Afghan Turkistan and the mountainous north eastern province of Badakhshan.

Hence the Afghan boundaries had not only divided the geographical region but also the human groups. They had represented the limits of the growth of Russia and Britain. They had formed the part of imperial boundaries of Russia and British India. But the geographical limits that had appeared natural to the British and the Russians, was not regarded as a geographical obstacle by the Afghans. They in fact treated it as merely a political obstacle.

The imperial powers, while demarcating the Afghan boundary, had concerned themselves in keeping out the Afghans from areas where they had or intended to occupy, so that the

territorial disputes may be weeded out and a proper alignment of boundaries, favourable to them, be made.

As a result, the creation of the New Afghan frontiers were caused by the Russian and British expansion in Central Asia. The stand taken by them hardened as a result of the pursuance of a cautious policy. The line that had marked the imperial boundary that is, the Afghan boundaries were only approximate, as it denoted the maximum limit of outward expansion from the centre of the imperial growth. But the methods and the policy of imperial expansion had failed to take into account the development and progress of the Afghans. It is only at this point that the absolute concepts of the boundary making had given away to a practical compromise. This compromise had been unfortunately on the Afghan cost. The need and motives to retain the Cis-frontier areas by the imperial powers had made them to overlook the necessity of a defined area of the Trans-frontier regions, that is Afghanistan. Again the definitions of the Afghan boundaries had contradicted the policy of the imperial powers, as the very act of boundary definition acknowledge that independence of Afghanistan.

The form of negotiations and compromise though failed to recognize Afghanistan as an important element, the imperial powers had to admit while negotiating, the preponderance of the centrifugal forces in Afghanistan. Moreover, the annexation of Afghanistan by either of the imperial powers, could have been disastrous to their empires, for Afghanistan offered little of



centripetal advantages to alien rulers other than Afghans.

The territorial growth of peoples and the state are almost identical. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that the ethnic expansion of the peoples is governed by the rate of natural increase and whose limits are subjected to slight fluctuations. On the contrary, the frontiers of the state, after a period of permanence, are suddenly subjected to external pressures and changes, which are usually far beyond the existing ethnical boundaries, and Afghanistan affords a good example. Although the ethnic expansion coupled with the large scale transfer of population which was affected by the subsequent conquerors on Afghanistan, the frontier area explicit in their complexity and the wide variations which they were subjected to. But Afghanistan though expounded ethnically, could not affect a correlation with the political area, for the frequency of the internal disturbances ruled out any such effort. At the same time, this had inadvertently resulted in the delimitation and demarcation of the boundaries of Afghanistan, which did not correspond neither with the ethnical boundaries nor with the geographical factors.

Again the relation between the Afghans as a people and the Afghanistan as a state, lay essentially only in the political frontiers and boundaries. The boundaries have in fact fixed the territorial limits of the Afghan administrative functions. These have not only confined the Afghans from expanding but also divided their existing ethnic distribution and composition.

Although the coincidence of the boundary with the natural features have enabled the confinement of the peoples, it could not however control the pent up force and pressure of the isolated Afghans, which were evident in the frequent uprisings in the Afghan eastern frontiers, during the early period of demarcation and persist even after the boundary had been permanently established. These boundaries have formed a continued source of friction between Afghanistan and the British in India and latter between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Thus the collision of the two politico-territorial systems, Russia and Britain in Central Asia, had left in their wake, a vaguely defined frontier zone, Afghan<sup>istan</sup>. This frontier zone had missed history of civil wars and foreign invasions and it was only gradually that the internal political form began to take shape, when it became the buffer state between the two imperial powers. With the definition and the alignment of boundaries of Afghanistan, its geographical role receded due to the peripheral political pressures. The new boundaries, which had precise definition made it a distinct political entity between the two imperial powers. Its historical role as a neutral zone separating Britain and Russia had repeated itself, only in a different context, that is, it now separates Soviet Union from the West.

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## APPENDIX I

Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, concluded at Gandamak on the 26th May 1879, by His Highness the Amir Muhammad Yakub Khan on his own part, and on the part of the British Government by Major P.O.N. Cavagnari, C.S.I., Political Officer on Special Duty, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Honorable Edward Robert Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, Baron Lytton of Knebworth, and a Baronet, Grand Master of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Grand Master of the Order of the Indian Empire, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

The following Articles of a Treaty for the restoration of peace and amicable relations have been agreed upon between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies:-

### Article 1

From the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present Treaty there shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government on the one part and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, and his successors, on the other.

### Article 2

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies engages, on the exchange of the ratifications of this Treaty, to publish a full and complete amnesty, absolving all his subjects from any responsibility for intercourse with the British Forces during the war, and to guarantee and protect all persons of whatever degree from any punishment or molestation on that account.

### Article 3

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees to conduct his relations with Foreign States, in accordance with the advice and wishes of the British Government. His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign States, and will not take up arms against any Foreign State except with

the concurrence of the British Government. On these conditions, the British Government will support the Amir against any foreign aggression with money, arms, or troops, to be employed in whatsoever manner the British Government may judge best for this purpose. Should British troops at any time enter Afghanistan for the purpose of repelling foreign aggression, they will return to their stations in British territory as soon as the object for which they entered has been accomplished.

#### Article 4

With a view to the maintenance of the direct and intimate relations now established between the British Government and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and for the better protection of the frontiers of His Highness's dominions, it is agreed that a British Representative shall reside at Kabul, with a suitable escort in a place of residence appropriate to his rank and dignity. It is also agreed that the British Government shall have the right to depute British Agents with suitable escorts to the Afghan frontiers, whensoever this may be considered necessary by the British Government in the interests of both States, on the occurrence of any important external fact. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan may on his part depute an Agent to reside at the Court of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, and at such other places in British India as may be similarly agreed upon.

#### Article 5

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies guarantees the personal safety and honorable treatment of British Agents within his jurisdiction; and the British Government on its part undertakes that its Agents shall never in any way interfere with the internal administration of His Highness's dominions.

#### Article 6

His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies undertakes, on behalf of himself and his successors, to offer no impediment to British subjects peacefully trading within his dominions so long as they do so with the permission of the British Government, and in accordance with such arrangements as may be mutually agreed upon from time to time between the two Governments.

## Article 7

In order that the passage of trade between the territories of the British Government and of His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan may be open and uninterrupted, His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan agrees to use his best endeavours to ensure the protection of traders and to facilitate the transit of goods along the well-known customary roads of Afghanistan. These roads shall be improved and maintained in such manner as the two Governments may decide to be most expedient for the general convenience of traffic, and under such financial arrangements as may be mutually determined upon between them. The arrangements made for the maintenance and security of the aforesaid roads, for the settlement of the duties to be levied upon merchandize carried over these roads, and for the general protection and development of trade with, and through the dominions of His Highness, will be stated in a separate Commercial Treaty, to be concluded within one year, due regard being given to the state of the country.

## Article 8

With a view to facilitate communications between the allied Governments and to aid and develop intercourse and commercial relations between the two countries, it is hereby agreed that a line of telegraph from Kurram to Kabul shall be constructed by, and at the cost of the British Government, and the Amir of Afghanistan hereby undertakes to provide for the proper protection of this telegraph line.

## Article 9

In consideration of the renewal of a friendly alliance between the two States which has been attested and secured by the foregoing Articles, the British Government restores to His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies the towns of Kandahar and Jellalabad, with all the territory now in possession of the British armies, excepting the districts of Kurram, Pishin, and Sibi. His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees on his part that the district of Kurram and Pishin and Sibi, according to the limits defined in the schedule annexed\* shall remain under the protection and administrative control of the British Government: that is to say, the aforesaid districts shall be treated as assigned districts, and shall not be considered as permanently severed from the limits of the

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\* Not reproduced.

Afghan kingdom. The revenues of these districts after deducting the charges of civil administration shall be paid to His Highness the Amir.

The British Government will retain in its own hands the control of the Khyber and Michni Passes, which lie between the Peshawar and Jellalabad Districts, and of all relations with the independent tribes of the territory directly connected with these Passes.

#### Article 10

For the further support of His Highness the Amir in the recovery and maintenance of his legitimate authority, and in consideration of the efficient fulfilment in their entirety of the engagements stipulated by the foregoing Articles, the British Government agrees to pay to His Highness the Amir and to his successors an annual subsidy of six lakhs of Rupees.

Done at Gandamak, this 26th day of May 1879, corresponding with the 4th day of the month of Jamadi-us-sani 1296, A.H.

N. CAVAGNARI, Major,  
Poltl. Officer on Special Duty.

Amir Muhammad Yakub Khan.

LYTTON.

This treaty was ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, at Simla, on Friday, this 30th day of May 1879.

A.C. LYALL,  
Secy. to the Govt. of India, Foreign  
Dept.

## APPENDIX II

### Description of the Afghan Frontier between the Heri-Rud and the Oxus

(AMOU-DARIA)

The frontier begins on the right bank of the Heri-Rud at a point marked on the map by pillar No. 1 about 8,500 feet distant from a small tower situated on a mound at the entrance of the Zulficar Pass. Pillar No. 2 is placed on the top of the neighbouring rock which commands pillar No. 1. From pillar No. 2, the frontier turns to the north for a distance of about half a mile as far as pillar No. 3, which is situated on an eminence at the western extremity of a detached portion of the cliff. From thence the frontier runs in a straight line towards the top of a steep hill about a mile and a half distant in an east-north-easterly direction and reaches pillar No. 4, placed on a low mound in the plain. Beyond this pillar the frontier, taking a more easterly direction, runs for a distance of 4 miles as far as pillar No. 5, placed on an eminence, and well in view of the second line of heights on the northern side of a natural cavity in the rock. From this point the frontier runs in a south-easterly direction along the crest of the second line of heights as far as pillar No. 6, placed on the ridge of the northern cliff of the eastern defile, at a distance of about a mile from the centre of the defile. Pillar No. 7 is placed below pillar No. 6 near the road in the middle of the pass, and pillar No. 8 is on the top of the southern cliff facing pillar No. 6. The frontier then descends the crest of the second line of heights in a southerly direction, and crosses the path leading to Karez-Elias and Abi-Charmi at a point about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant from the bifurcation of the four roads converging at the eastern extremity of the defile of Zulficar. Pillar No. 9 is placed to the east of the path on a small rock which overhangs it. From this pillar the frontier gradually ascends the line of water-parting as far as the highest summit of the range of Deugli-Dagh, marked by pillar No. 10. At the eastern extremity of this range stands pillar No. 11. At a distance of about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  miles in a south-easterly direction are three low hills. On the middle one is placed pillar No. 12. Again turning somewhat to the east the frontier runs towards pillar No. 13, placed beside the road about half-way between Ak-Robat and Sumbakarez, and thence to pillar No. 14, situated at a distance of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the east on the top of a hill.

Pillar No. 15 is about 9 miles from Ak-Robat, on the road leading to An-Rohak, from thence the frontier runs in a straight line towards pillar No. 16, placed on the more easterly and the higher of the two mounds of Koscha-Tehingua,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of An-Rohak. At about the same distance to the north-west of the spring of Islim, stands pillar No. 17 placed on a flat-topped

hill; on the side of the road between An-Rohak and Islim, on a gentle slope, is placed pillar No. 18 about 3 miles west of Islim, on the southern side of the stream. Pillar No. 19 is placed on the rounded crest of a small chain of heights 3 miles south of Islim.

From pillar No. 36 placed on the right bank of the Murghab, about 3 miles north of Meruchak Fort, on a height commanding the river, the frontier runs eastwards towards pillar No. 38, passing by pillar No. 37, which is situated on the road leading from the valley of Meruchak along the Galla-Chasma Chor.

Pillar No. 38 is placed on an elevated point of the "Chul" at about 11 miles from the valley of Meruchak. The frontier from thence continues in an east-north-easterly direction towards pillar No. 39, situated about a mile south-east of the spring of Khwaja-Gongourdak; after that in a straight line and with north-easterly direction towards pillar No. 40 on an elevated point of the "Chul," from thence east-north-east towards pillar No. 41, situated on a height about 12 miles north of Kilawali; further on the frontier follows an east-north-easterly direction towards pillar No. 42, placed on a height 2 miles west of the Pakana-Shor, and continues in the same direction as far as pillar No. 43. From this pillar the frontier runs in a south-easterly direction towards pillar No. 44, placed on the most elevated point of the watershed between the basins of the Kara-Baba and the Kaissar, known by the name of Bel-i-Parandas. Following this line in a northerly direction the frontier reaches pillar No. 45 situated about 3 miles south-west of the well of Beshdara. From thence it follows in a north-easterly direction a branch of the watershed, and arrives at pillar No. 46, situated at a distance of more than a mile to the south-west of the well of Beshdara. It runs from thence in an easterly direction irregularly towards pillar No. 47, situated about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the point where the road from Khwaja-Gachai and Kassawa-Kala crosses the Shor-Egri. From thence the frontier runs to the north-east along a secondary watershed towards pillar No. 48, and follows the same line as far as pillar No. 49 which is placed at the highest point of the watershed north of the Shor-Egri, and about 6 miles to the west of the confluence of the Shor-Gandabulak and the Shor-Egri. From thence the frontier runs in a straight line to the north-east, crossing the Shor-Gandabulak at pillar No. 50, which is placed on a hill with two peaks, rising from the line of water-parting between the Shor-Gandabulak and the Shor-Tara-Kui. Following the same direction it reaches Shor-Tara-Kui, where pillar No. 51 is placed near the road from Jalaiour on the Kaissar to Jalgun-Koudouk and Kara-Baba. The frontier passes thence in a north-easterly direction to pillar No. 52 at a point a mile to the north of the well of Alini. From this pillar the frontier runs north-north-east towards pillar No. 54 crossing the Daulatabad-Bazara-Koudouk road near pillar No. 53. Pillar No. 54 is placed on the highest point of



a group of sandy hills 2 miles north of the well of Katar-Koudouk; from thence the line of the frontier runs for about 10 miles with a slight inclination to the north-north-west towards pillar No. 55, placed on a mound at the end of a chain of hills which extends between the depression of Kui-Sarai and that in which the well of Khwaja-Ahmad is situated. From this pillar the frontier runs in a straight line northwards for a mile and a quarter towards pillar No. 56, which is situated on a natural elevation a few feet south of the road between Jalanguir and Meruchak, from thence it proceeds to pillar No. 57,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the north-north-west, and situated on the top of the heights which form the northern limit of the depression of Kui-Sarai. From this point the frontier runs to the north-north-east towards pillar No. 58, placed on one of the sandy mounds of the heights which command the plain extending to the west of Andkhai; the frontier then turns rather more to the east towards pillar No. 59, placed on a low sandy hill about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the east-south-east of the well of Sari Mat. It next reaches in a north-north-westerly direction, pillar No. 60, placed between the wells of Chichli and Gokchah, about a quarter of a mile to the west of the wells of Chichli. Leaving Gokchah to Russia, and Chichli to Afghanistan, the frontier runs in a straight line to pillar No. 61, placed 300 feet to the east of the road which leads from Andkhai to Sechanchi; thence, following the same direction, it reaches pillar No. 62, placed on a well-defined sandy mound known by the name of Madali-Koum; the frontier line then reaches in an east-north-easterly direction pillar No. 63, placed to the north of Oikul, an elliptically shaped valley 3,600 feet in length, and at the bottom of which are situated two "Kaks" or basins of fresh water, which remain within Afghan territory. Turning then in an east-south-easterly direction the frontier reaches in a straight line pillar No. 64, placed on a sandy hill known by the name of Gichi-Kumi, and continues in a north-easterly direction as far as pillar No. 65, placed on the high road between Andkhai and Dugchi and Karki, at a point  $4\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the south of Dugchi and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  miles to the north of Sultan Robot.

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### APPENDIX III

Agreement between His Highness Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, G.C.S.I., Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, on the one part, and Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, representing the Government of India on the other part,  
--1893.

Whereas the British Government has represented to His Highness the Amir that the Russian Government presses for the literal fulfilment of the Agreement of 1873 between Russia and England by which it was decided that the river Oxus should form the northern boundary of Afghanistan from Lake Victoria (Wood's Lake) or Sarikul on the east to the junction of the Kokcha with the Oxus, and whereas the British Government considers itself bound to abide by the terms of this agreement, if the Russian Government equally abides by them, His Highness Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, G.C.S.I., Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, wishing to show his friendship to the British Government and his readiness to accept their advice in matters affecting his relations with Foreign Powers, hereby agrees that he will evacuate all the districts held by him to the north of this portion of the Oxus on the clear understanding that all the districts lying to the south of this portion of the Oxus and not now in his possession, be handed over to him in exchange. And Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, hereby declares on the part of the British Government that the transfer to His Highness the Amir of the said districts lying to the south of the Oxus is an essential part of this transaction, and undertakes that arrangements will be made with the Russian Government to carry out the transfer of the said lands to the north and south of the Oxus.

H.M. DURAND

Amir Abdur Rahman Khan.

Agreement between His Highness Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, G.C.S.I., Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies on the one part, and Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, representing the Government of India on the other part,  
--1893.

Whereas certain questions have arisen regarding the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India, and whereas both His Highness the Amir and the Government of India are desirous of settling these questions by a friendly understanding, and

of fixing the limit of their respective spheres of influence, so that for the future there may be no difference of opinion on the subject between the allied Governments, it is hereby agreed as follows:-

(1) The eastern and southern frontier of His Highness's dominions, from Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown in the map\* attached to this agreement.

(2) The Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and His Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.

(3) The British Government thus agrees to His Highness the Amir retaining Asmar and the valley above it, as far as Chanak. His Highness agrees on the other hand that he will at no time exercise interference in Swat, Bajaur or Chitral including the Arnawari or Bashgal valley. The British Government also agrees to leave to His Highness the Birmal tract as shown in the detailed map already given to His Highness, who relinquishes his claim to the rest of the Waziri country and Dawar. His Highness also relinquishes his claim to Chageh.

(4) The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated wherever this may be practicable and desirable by Joint British and Afghan Commissioners, whose object will be to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the line shown in the map\* attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.

(5) With reference to the question of Chaman, the Amir withdraws his objection to the new British Cantonment and concedes to the British Government the rights purchased by him in the Sirkai Tilerai water. At this part of the frontier, the line will be drawn as follows:-

From the crest of the Khwaja Amran range near the Psha Kotal, which remains in British territory, the line will run in such a direction as to leave Murgha Chaman and the Sharobo spring to Afghanistan, and to pass half way between the New Chaman Fort and the Afghan outpost known locally as Lashkar Dand. The line will then pass half way between the railway station and the hill known as the Mian Baldak, and, turning southwards, will rejoin the Khwaja Amran range, leaving the Gwasha Post in British territory, and the road to Shorawak to the west and south of Gwasha in Afghanistan. The British Government will not exercise any interference within half a mile of the road.

(6) The above articles of agreement are regarded by the Government of India and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan as a full and satisfactory settlement of all the principal differences of opinion which have arisen between them in regard to the frontier; and both the Government of India and His Highness the Amir undertake that any differences of detail such as those which will have to be considered hereafter by the officers appointed to demarcate the boundary line, shall be settled in a friendly spirit, so as to remove for the future as far as possible all causes of doubt and misunderstanding between the two Governments.

(7) Being fully satisfied of His Highness's good will to the British Government, and wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objection to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war, and they will themselves grant him some help in this respect. Further, in order to mark their sense of the friendly spirit in which His Highness the Amir has entered into these negotiations, the Government of India undertake to increase by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year the subsidy of twelve lakhs now granted to His Highness.

H.M. DURAND.

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN.

KABUL;

12th November 1893.

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## APPENDIX IV

### ARBITRAL AWARD ON THE SEISTAN WATER QUESTION, DATED THE 10TH APRIL 1905

#### Preliminary Remarks

Paragraph 1. - General Sir Frederick Goldsmid, as Arbitrator between Persia and Afghanistan, was called upon to settle the question of rights to land and water of Persia and Afghanistan in Seistan. He delivered an arbitral award on both points in 1872, which was confirmed by Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and accepted by the Persian and Afghan Governments in 1873.

2. At the time of the above award, the Helmand river had one main distributary channel in Seistan, i.e., the Rud-i-Seistan, at the mouth of which, in order to divert sufficient water into this Rud, was a tamarisk band known as the Band-i-Kohak or Band-i-Seistan. The Helmand river from thence onwards flowed in one channel past Nad Ali and along what is now known as the Sikhsar into the Naizar and Hamun. In 1896 a large flood caused the river to burst out for itself a new main channel, which left the old one near Shahgul and is now known as the Rud-i-Pariun.

3. Various disputes regarding water between Persian and Afghan Seistan, which were caused by changes in the course of canals and in the course of the main river, have arisen since 1872. My enquiries show that these have, until recently, always been mutually and amicably settled by the responsible officials concerned on both sides, i.e., the Governors of Seistan and Chakhansur. These officials, who thoroughly understood each other's water requirements, have always shown great tact and skill in settling water disputes to the mutual satisfaction of both countries.

4. Unfortunately of recent years, whatever may have been the cause, and whether this was due to the changes in the course of the main stream, or to more strained relations, the amicable settlement of water difficulties has been found to be no longer possible. A series of small, and in themselves unimportant, water questions arose between 1900 and 1902, which by reason of estranged relations, caused mutual misunderstanding and increased ill-feeling, until matters were brought to a crisis by further disputes arising from abnormal deficiency of water in the Helmand in 1902. This led to the present reference to the arbitration of the British Government.

5. The condition under which the present arbitration has been agreed to by the Governments of Persia and Afghanistan

is that the award should be in accordance with the terms of Sir Frederick Goldsmid's award.

6. In framing my award I am, therefore, restricted by the above condition.

7. Sir Frederick Goldsmid's award on the water question was as follows:-

"It is to be clearly understood that no works are to be carried out on either side calculated to interfere with the requisite supply of irrigation on both banks of the Helmand." Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in his capacity as the final confirming authority of that award further laid down in 1873, after consulting General Goldsmid, that the above clause should not be understood to apply either to existing canals or to old or disused canals that it may be desired to put in proper repair, nor would it interfere with the excavation of new canals, provided that the requisite supply on both banks is not diminished.

8. The above award is so definite that it is unnecessary to make any attempt to define it further, except on one particular point. This award provides that Persia has a right to a requisite supply of water for irrigation. In order to prevent future misunderstandings, it only remains to define what amount of water fairly represents a requisite supply for Persian requirements.

9. From the careful and exhaustive measurements, observations, and enquiries made by this Mission in Seistan, the following facts have been clearly established:-

(a) Seistan suffers more from excess than deficiency of water. Far more loss is caused by damage done to land and crops year after year by floods, than is caused by want of water for irrigation.

(b) In only very few exceptional abnormal years of low river has any question of sufficiency of water arisen in Seistan, and then Afghan Seistan has suffered equally with Persian Seistan. Moreover, questions as to the sufficiency of water only prove serious when the spring crop cultivation is concerned, when the river is at its lowest, i.e., between the autumn and spring equinoxes, yet it has been ascertained that in only 3 out of the past 35 years has there been any serious deficiency of water in Seistan during that season. It is necessary, therefore, first to consider water requirements during the season of spring crops. Any settlement based on the requirements of that season will meet the case of the remainder of the year also.

(c) After carefully calculating the normal volume of the Helmand river during the period between the autumn equinox

and the spring equinox it has been clearly ascertained that one-third of the water which now reaches Seistan at Bandar-i-Kamal Khan would amply suffice for the proper irrigation of all existing cultivation in Persian Seistan, and also allow of a large future extension of that cultivation. This would leave a requisite supply for all Afghan requirements.

10. I therefore give the following award:-

#### AWARD

Clause I. - No irrigation works are to be carried out on either side calculated to interfere with the requisite supply of water for irrigation on both banks of the river but both sides have the right, within their own territories, to maintain existing canals, to open out old or disused canals, and to make new canals, from the Helmand river, provided that the supply of water requisite for irrigation on both sides is not diminished.

Clause II. - The amount of water requisite for irrigation of Persian lands irrigable from and below the Band-i-Kohak is one-third of the whole volume of the Helmand river which enters Seistan.

Seistan, to which Sir Frederick Goldsmid's award applies, comprises all lands on both banks of the Helmand from Bandar-i-Kamal Khan downwards.

Clause III. - Persia is, therefore, entitled to one-third of the whole Helmand River calculated at the point where water is first taken off from it to irrigate lands on either bank situated at or below Bandar-i-Kamal Khan.

Clause IV. - Any irrigation works constructed by Afghanistan to divert water into Seistan lands, as above defined, must allow of at least one-third of the volume of the whole river being available for Persian use at Band-i-Kohak.

Clause V. - To enable both sides to satisfy themselves that this award is being complied with, and at the same time to avoid the necessity of fresh references to the British Government and the expense of special Mission, a British officer of irrigation experience shall be permanently attached to the British Consulate in Seistan. He will be empowered to give an opinion, when required by either party, on any case of doubt or dispute over water questions that may arise. He will, when necessary, take steps to bring the real facts of any case to the notice of the Government concerned. He will be able also to call the attention of either party to any important indications of threatening danger to their water-supply arising from natural causes or their own irrigation works. To enable this officer properly to fulfill the functions of his office, free access

shall be given to him by either side to the Helmand river and its branches and the heads of canals leading therefrom.

Clause VI. - The maintenance of the Band-i-Kohak is of great importance to the welfare of Persian Seistan. It is possible that the deepening of the river bed at and below the site of the present band may necessitate moving the band a short distance further up the river. Afghanistan should allow Persia to move this band, if necessary, and grant Persia the right to excavate the short canal required for such new band through Afghan territory to the Rud-i-Seistan.

Similarly, should it become necessary for Afghanistan to move the present Shahgul Band across the Rud-i-Pariun somewhat lower down that stream, Persia should (as has been done before) allow Afghanistan right of way for a canal through Persian territory from that band to the Nad Ali Channel.

Clause VII. - It will be noted that the rights to the Helmand river which her geographical position naturally gives to Afghanistan as owner of the Upper Helmand, have been restricted to the extent stated above in favour of Persia in accordance with Sir Frederick Goldsmid's award. It follows, therefore, that Persia has no right to alienate to any other Power the water rights thus acquired without the consent of Afghanistan.

Clause VIII. - I cannot close this award without a word of warning to both countries concerned. The past history of the Helmand river in Seistan shows that it has always been subject to sudden and important changes in its course, which have from time to time diverted the whole river into a new channel and rendered useless all the then existing canal systems. Such changes are liable to occur in the future, and great care should, therefore, be exercised in the opening out of new canals, or the enlargement of old canals leading from the Helmand. Unless this is done with proper precaution, it may cause the river to divert itself entirely at such points and cause great loss to both countries. This danger applies equally to Afghanistan and Persia.

CAMP KOHAK,  
The 10th April 1905.

A.H. McMahon, Colonel,  
British Commissioner,  
Seistan Arbitration Commission.



## APPENDIX V

Commission appointed to enquire into on the spot and settle the question of the alleged infractions, which may have been committed by either side, of the stipulations relating to the waters of the Kushk, and contained in Protocol No. 4 signed at St. Petersburg on the 10th July 1887, by the delegates 22nd of Russia and Great Britain for the elimination of the North-West Frontier of Afghanistan.

Meeting held at the camp of the British Commissioner at Chahil Dukhteran on the 22nd August 1893.  
3rd September

There were present on the part of Great Britain --

Lieutenant-Colonel C.E. Yate, C.S.I., C.M.G.

Lieutenant The Honorable H.D. Napier.

On the part of Russia --

Collegiate Conseiller V. Ignatiew.

Lieutenant-Colonel L. Artamanow of the General Staff.

Sarhang Mahmud Khan, the Representative of His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan, was also present.

The Russian and British Commissioners after having thoroughly examined\* the question of the canals existing at present on the left (Afghan) bank of the Kushk between Karatappa and Chahil Dukhteran, enumerated in Protocol No. 1 of the Commission, and marked on the map annexed to it, and taking as a basis the stipulations of Clause III of Protocol 4 of 1887, and Captains Peacocke and Kontratenko's map, Annex. No. II to this latter Protocol, have come to an agreement on the following arrangements:-

### I

All the irrigation canals in use at present on the left (Afghan) bank of the Kushk between Karatappa and Chahil Dukhteran

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\* The details of this examination are recorded in the preceding Protocols of the Commission.

namely, the canals--

- (1) Karatappa Kalan, marked by the letters B.I. on the map attached to Protocol No. 1 of the Commission.
- (2) Chapgul, marked by the letter C on the same map.
- (3) Khwajah Jir, marked by the latter D.
- (4) The branches of the Pul-i-Khishti and Chahil Dukhteran canals marked by the letters E and F which irrigate the Afghan lands north of the parallel of latitude of the Chahil Dukhteran Frontier Pillar No. 23, also marked on the said map, constitute an infraction of the stipulations of Clause III of Protocol No. 4 of 10th July 1887, and consequently should be definitely closed.

The British Commissioner will immediately take the necessary measures to execute this arrangement.

## II

The mill canal, marked by the letter A on the map attached to Protocol No. 1 of the Commission, not being used for irrigation, does not constitute an infraction of the stipulations of Clause III of Protocol No. 4 of 1887, but as it is at present longer than is necessary, it should be shortened to the minimum length required by local conditions, and the water of this canal cannot be used for irrigation under any pretext. The British Commissioner will take the necessary measures in order that these arrangements may be carried out.

## III

In order to elucidate and complete Clause III of Protocol No. 4 of 10th July 1887, the Commissioners have established that

the Afghans shall not be able to take off water from the river Kushk, north of the ruins of the Chahil Dukhteran bridge (Pul-i-Khishti), for irrigation by means of either new or disused or closed canals, the Afghans shall not have the right to carry on, below the parallel of Chahil Dukhteran Frontier Pillar No. 23, for irrigation, the branches of the canals which take off from the Kushk south of the ruins of the Chahil Dukhteran bridge (Pul-i-Khishti), but they shall have the right to make use of the said branches to irrigate their cultivation as far as the parallel of the Chahil Dukhteran Frontier Pillar No. 23.

The Afghans shall also have the right to the free use for irrigation or any other purpose of the waters of springs which exist on the left bank of the Kushk between the hills and the river to the south of the Karatappa Frontier Pillar No. 22, up to the points where these springs reach the stream of the river.

To the south of the ruins of the Chahil Dukhteran bridge (Pul-i-Khishti) the Afghans have full rights to all the water of the Kushk and shall not be subject to any restriction whatever.

## IV

The want of water in the Kushk, no matter from whatever cause arising, provided that the Afghans maintain the stipulations of Clause III of Protocol No. 4 of 10th July 1887, and the 22nd arrangements above set forth cannot give cause for further claims on the part of the Russian authorities.

Chas. E. Yate, Lieut.-Col.

V. Ignatiew

H.D. Napier, Lieut.

L. Artamonoff

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