COLONIALISM AND STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN: ANGLO-AFGHAN CO-OPERATION IN THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ETHNIC DIFFERENCE, 1869-1900

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Contents

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Maps

Afghanistan in the late nineteenth century[1]

[1] C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908* (London: Curzon Press, 1932), fig. Map 1.

Introduction

A case of historiographical anomaly: Re-assessing Afghanistan's place in nineteenth century British colonial history

The last fifteen years of US-led military intervention have unleashed a great interest in Afghan politics, but very little attention has been devoted to its history. Nowadays, Afghanistan continues to be seen as a society fractured along tribal, ethnic and sectarian lines. Such was the understanding in colonial sources and remains the common sense surrounding Western European perceptions of the region. When I first started to research Afghanistan's nineteenth century history I was struck by the fact that historians seemed to have produced a largely singular narrative about Afghan society, one that closely reflected representations in colonial sources, with little critical reflection on how these social divisions, if indeed they existed as such, had come about.[2] Such scholars explained tribal divisions as people's propensity for conflict and their bellicose character. These tensions were long-standing animosities dating back to time immemorial and which were embedded in the very character of the people, so the argument went. This perspective continues to inform not only public perceptions but also much scholarship, which maintains that ethnic and tribal conflict lie at the foundation of political instability in Afghanistan. It was the political context – the dynamics of the Cold War, the Soviet intervention, and the rise of the Taliban – which have unleashed pre-modern divisions again.[3] The 2001 American intervention in Afghanistan prompted renewed scholarly interest in the region. However, this has not been translated into a re-evaluation of the narrative of ineluctable Afghan fragmentation and state-failure. On the contrary, American

[2] Percy Sykes, *History of Afghanistan*, vol. Vol. II (London: Macmillan and Co., 1940); William Kerr Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia* (Oxford: Ohio University Press, 1953); Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C.—A.D. I957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958).

[3] Michael A Barry, *Le royaume de l'insolence: la résistance afghane du Grand Moghol à l'invasion soviétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984); Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Thomas J Barfield, 'Afghanistan's Ethnic Puzzle: Decentralizing Power before the U. S. Withdrawal', *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): 54–65; Barfield T, 'The Roots of Failure in Afghanistan', *Current History* 107, no. 713 (2008): 410–17; Barnett R Rubin, 'Post-Cold War State Disintegration: The Failure of International Conflict Resolution in Afghanistan', *Journal of International Affairs (New York)*, 1993, 469–92; Jonathan Steele, *Ghosts of Afghanistan: Hard Truths and Foreign Myths* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2011); Sven Gunnar Simonsen, 'Ethnicising Afghanistan? Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building', *Third World Quarterly*, 2004, 707–29; A Saikal, 'Afghanistan's Ethnic Conflict', *Survival* 40, no. 2 (1998): 114–26.

authorities have often translated colonial ideas of Afghan sociology and frontier governance into their policy making, as the Human Terrain System, a system developed by the US army to provide commanders in Afghanistan with knowledge about local populations, has shown.

Why, given that a great deal of what we know about Afghanistan in the nineteenth century has come from colonial writing, has this knowledge not been critically evaluated in the same way as colonial knowledge elsewhere? Since the 1980s, historians and anthropologists of modern South Asia have taken a more critical approach to the study of caste and religion and its relationship to British colonialism. However, while the history of the subcontinent has been reshaped by key historiographical turns, the history of Afghanistan has largely remained untouched by them. Historians of Afghanistan seem to have followed a trajectory of their own, apparently isolated from their colleagues in other regions. They have focused on the so-called Great Game – the competition between the British and the Russian empires in Central Asia – and its role in pushing the government of India to adopt a more aggressive policy towards Afghanistan. Less attention has been devoted to the role Afghanistan had in delineating the government of India's policy. These scholars have not engaged in those debates that led to a critical re-evaluation of colonial contributions to shaping native societies, marginally considering the role of the colonial government of India in shaping the development of the Afghan state. They have depicted Afghanistan's fractured social ecology and the failure to develop into a Westphalian-style state as endogenous characteristics, originating from within Afghanistan.

At the same time, the possibility of Afghanistan being influenced to some degree by its imperial neighbour has been neglected or not fully disentangled.[4] It is noteworthy that the colonial influence on the princely states of India and on the polities along British India's fringes including Afghanistan have been treated in separate realms of scholarship. There has not yet been a systematic consideration of indirect rule in India and Afghanistan, as scholars have not fully considered the relationship between indirect forms of colonial influence and indigenous state-

[4] Sayed Qassem Reshtia, *Between Two Giants: Political History of Afghanistan in the Nineteenth Century* (Peshawar: Afghan Jehad Works Translation Centre, 1990); Zalmay Gulzad, *External Influences and the Development of the Afghan State in the Nineteenth Century*, American University Studies, v. 161 (New York: P. Lang, 1994); M. Hasan Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006).

building, something that has been the subject of historical analysis for the African continent.[5] In the case of Afghanistan, the question of how to account for its long-lasting relations with the British empire has remained open. If Afghanistan was somehow part of the political universe the British empire had created in the subcontinent, then why have historians never really taken the colonial variable into account when discussing Afghanistan's developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?

This dissertation is a study of British policies of state-building and administrative reform carried out in Afghanistan during the second Afghan War (1878-81) and the mechanisms through which these were adapted and indigenized by the Afghan political elite over the following years (1881-1900). It addresses the question of Afghanistan's place within the British empire and the extent to which we can think about Afghanistan as a colonised polity. In particular, it discusses the government of India's policies during the second Afghan war and the British-led boundary commissions that defined the polity's borders during the 1880-90s. For these moments of direct Anglo-Afghan encounter, this project investigates the ways in which colonial ideas about Afghan society, systematized around the categories of tribe, ethnicity and sect by the second half of the nineteenth century, informed the government of India's approach. This project argues that the military occupation of Kabul and Kandahar (1879-81) and the making of Afghanistan's north-western frontier (1884-7) were formative moments for British reforms of Afghan institutions, especially at the local level. This thesis investigates how on these occasions British colonial ideas of state-building and colonial sociology were incorporated into the native process of state-building and became part of amir Abdur Rahman's territorial expansion and institutional reforms.

I argue that in the second half of the nineteenth century the government of India succeeded in making Afghanistan into a subordinate polity that was included into the British sphere of imperial paramountcy. The colonial government of India never formally ruled Afghanistan but was nonetheless able to devise strategies of indirect influence-building. This study questions Afghanistan's place within the

[5] A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*, Ibadan History Series (London: Longman, 1972); Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994); Jason Conard Myers, *Indirect Rule in South Africa: Tradition, Modernity, and the Costuming of Political Power* (Rochester, N.Y.: University Rochester Press, 2008).

history of the British empire and reverses the commonly held assumption that sees Afghanistan as outside of India's developments during colonial rule. I maintain that Afghanistan became an integral part of the British empire: during the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar and the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern boundaries, British officials developed strategies of empire-building – often translated as strategies of direct interference or more indirect influence – that engaged Afghan administrators and local tribal chiefs. They were able to translate colonial ideas of state-building and Afghan sociology into the structures of the developing Afghan state. These Anglo-Afghan encounters became crucial moments for the systematization of 'ethnicity' and 'tribe' as categories of social organization in Afghanistan, which would be reproduced in the government of Kabul's internal territorial annexations and institutional reforms. Thus, Afghanistan's encounter with the British empire and the forms of colonial influence this unleashed should not be considered marginal to the history of Afghanistan but taken seriously in their own right as formative moments in the shaping of the modern Afghan polity.

The historical problem of state formation in Afghanistan

The importance of nineteenth century Afghanistan lies in the profound transformation the region underwent in these years, from a loose political entity to assuming the contours of a modern state. In the first decades of this century, the Durrani Empire, first established in 1747 under Ahmad Shah Durrani, collapsed, leaving behind a territorially shrunken political entity centred in Kabul. In these years Afghanistan was a tribal kingdom, constituted by multiple and often overlapping centres of power – Kabul, Kandahar, Herat and Peshawar – lacking defined boundaries and a strong political centre.[6] This political configuration began to shift in the 1850s, following the first British military intervention and occupation of 1839-42. While in the country, the British actively intervened in internal politics and in the day-to-day running of the state, notably reforming the taxation system.[7] After their forced withdrawal, the British left the government to Dost Muhammed Khan, who first engaged in political reform and state-building.[8] His rudimental efforts at centralisation and creation of a standing army were furthered by Shere Ali Khan, who took the throne in 1868, after

[6] Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863)* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 1–3.
[7] M. E. Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841-2 in Afghanistan', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27, no. 2 (1964): 333–81.
[8] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*.

four years of power struggle. He worked towards curbing regional autonomies and extending control over them, drafting a centralised government, bureaucratic apparatus and a standing army.[9]

Historians, drawing on the official proclamations of the government of India in the nineteenth century, have often described the years between the first and the second Afghan wars as a period of 'masterly inactivity', during which the government of India abstained from interference and major contacts with Afghanistan. According to this argument, this approach started to shift in the 1870s when the government of India adopted a more aggressive 'forward policy', aimed at establishing Afghanistan as an effective buffer state to counter Russian expansion in Central Asia and providing British India with a 'scientific frontier' in the north-west.[10] However, the 1850-60s were decades of frequent Anglo-Afghan interaction: the government of India sent a political mission to Kabul in 1856 and signed political treaties with its counterpart in Kabul in 1855 and 1857. As chapter one will show, in the mid-1860s the government of India intervened in the Afghan succession to the throne. All along, the two polities were connected by century-long networks of commerce and religion.[11]

The second Afghan war (1878-81), similar to the first, ended with the forced withdrawal of the government of India's troops and the appointment of a new sovereign.[12] Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, who ruled from 1881 to 1901, pursued the political and administrative reforms initiated by his predecessors more steadily, succeeding for the first time in establishing Kabul's control over the whole of the territory that by the 1890s constituted Afghanistan. He incorporated those regional principalities – Maimena, Turkestan, Badakhshan, Hazarajat, Kafiristan – which still largely acted as semi-autonomous states and incorporated them into a project of centralization.[13] Thanks to British subsidies and military equipment he was able to re-organise the state's administrative structure, replacing the regional states with smaller

[9] Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969).
[10] Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798-1850* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1980).
[11] Robert D. Crews, *Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).
[12] Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars 1839-1919* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009).
[13] Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

provinces dependent on the centre, and forging a centralised bureaucracy. He also curbed the traditional political elites – regional khans and the religious establishment – and established a standing national army as a way to dismantle the reliance on tribal levies, which had represented the backbone of traditional regional autonomies.[14] The Amir also enacted policies of 'internal imperialism', including the forced pacification of various rebellious tribes and ethnic groups, particularly the Hazaras and Kafirs, whose territories were confiscated and distributed to Pashtun settlers.[15] While his reign was characterised by an over-reliance on the Pashtun ethnic group, he also forcefully resettled many Pashtun tribes to non-Pashtun territories of northern Afghanistan, as chapter three will show.[16]

By 1900 Afghanistan was systematised into a territorially bounded entity, whose frontiers had been demarcated by British India and Russia between 1872 and 1896.[17] From the point of view of the government of Kabul, the polity had undergone a process of territorial expansion to match its new international boundaries and had increased the centralisation of its institutions. The annexed provinces had been systemised into the developing state structure: the government of Kabul established provincial administrations managed by officials appointed by Kabul and extended a unified system of land revenue.

This study engages the scholarship on modern Afghanistan, on British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent and that literature on the British empire that has dealt with the forms of indirect governance. I approach Afghanistan's nineteenth century history as a process of constant entanglement with the imperial power, rather than a trajectory towards a certain form of state. I investigate the influence the government of India exercised on Afghanistan between 1869 and 1900 and disentangle the different moments in which knowledge exchange and more formal forms of British influence-building took place. In so doing, this thesis seeks to take Afghanistan's encounter with British colonialism seriously as a generative process for shaping modern Afghanistan and the social and political fractures that have emerged

[14] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*.
[15] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Karachi; Oxford: OUP, 1997).
[16] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*.
[17] British-led demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries: 1872-73 'Goldsmid Mission' delineating the Perso-Afghan border, 1885-88 'Ridgeway Line' marking the North-western border to Russia; 1891 North-eastern border to Russia; 1893 'Durand Line' marking the Afghan-Indian border. R. Gopalakrishnan, *The Geography and Politics of Afghanistan* (New Delhi: Concept, 1982).

within it. This research builds on the more recent works on Afghanistan that engage with the history of Anglo-Afghan relations, colonial knowledge and the moments of actual British intervention in the region.[18] This literature has begun to explore something that may be called colonial legacy in contemporary Afghan social and political structures. These works have focused on a re-evaluation of Anglo-Afghan relations and of the role the government of India played in the latter nineteenth century. They have unfolded a more widely shared acknowledgement that British colonialism had a much more far-reaching influence than earlier histories acknowledged, tending as they do to frame the two Afghan wars and British drawing of boundaries as short interludes in the country's history.[19]

Benjamin Hopkins in particular has evaluated the impact of the colonial production of knowledge on Afghanistan in the first decades of the nineteenth century, arguing that the 'Elphinstonian episteme' set the reference framework for future Anglo-Indian understandings of Afghanistan and its inhabitants.[20] Mountstuart Elphinstone, who led the first political mission to the court of the amir Shah Shuja in 1809, conceptualised Afghan society as both tribal in character and plagued by permanent conflict. Hopkins has argued that the 'flawed understanding' of Afghanistan elaborated around Elphinstone's work widely informed the government of India's policies – and ultimately led to their failure in the first Afghan war.[21] In contrast, this study suggests that in the later nineteenth century British policies towards Afghanistan were informed by more complex understandings than Elphinstone's, although they continued to be influential. The 'Elphinstonian episteme' continued to retain a significant leverage in colonial policy making throughout the nineteenth century, as the continuous reference to Elphinstone's writing in British reports show.

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[18] B. D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan: Market Relations and State Formation on a Colonial Frontier* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[19] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*; M. Hasan Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir ʾAbd Al-Rahman Khan*, Modern Middle East Series; No. 5 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

[20] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul, and Its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India: Comprising a View of the Afghaun Nation, and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown: J. Murray, 1815); Cited in Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 12.

[21] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 2.

However, during the second half of the nineteenth century colonial understandings of Afghanistan were influenced also by other concepts, particularly the theories of race, and their intersection with tribe and ethnicity, which suggest a less straightforward understanding of Afghan society as one solely informed by tribe.[22] This study shows that during the second Afghan war British policies were informed by colonial understandings of Afghan tribes as much as of Afghan genealogy, ethnic and sectarian groups. All together, they made for an approach towards Afghan society in which these categories often overlapped and were used interchangeably in the government of India's policy making on the ground. The many avatars of Elphinstone's understanding of Afghan society could be channelled into Afghanistan only through the moments of Anglo-Afghan encounter at the centre of this study: the second Afghan war and the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern borders towards Central Asia.

Similar to how knowledge on native society had been collected in the subcontinent, the government of India systematised data on Afghanistan into gazetteers, genealogies, tribal lists, ethnographic maps, histories and rudimental censuses.[23] During the second Afghan war, ideas of Afghan ethnic and sectarian difference contained in these works were used to create networks of loyalties that were meant to sustain long-term British-led states in Kabul and Kandahar. As will be seen in chapter two, ideas on the Hazaras, Durranis and Ghilzais were corroborated by discussions on these communities' history: they were thought of as groups in perpetual competition with their neighbours, this rivalry often dating back in history. The colonial understanding of the Afghan social landscape was not unlike the

[22] Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', in *The Concept of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Delhi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[23] *Gazetteer of Afghanistan Compiled in the Division of the Chief of Staff/General Staff India Calcutta/Simla: Govt of India, Kabul: Maps and Plans Secret* (Superintendent of Government Printing, 1910); Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, *Central Asia. Part II. A Contribution towards the Better Knowledge of the Topography, Ethnology, Resources & History of Afghanistan.*, vol. Pt. II (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1871); E. Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Countries Adjacent to India on the North-West: Including Sinde, Afghanistan, Beloochistan, the Punjab and the Neighbouring States* (London: Wm. H. Allen and Co, 1844); 'IOR/W/L/PS/21/H17, Tribal Map of Afghanistan', c 1900, Map collection, BL; 'Mss Eur F383, Printed Genealogies of Afghan Barakzai Tribe, Apparently Compiled, c1880, by an Officer during Second Afhan War', 1880, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL; 'Nos. 66-93, Report on the City of Kandahar; Its Revenue and Expenditure', 1879, Foreign Department, SS, NAI; Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, 1993, 316–17; Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Thongchakul Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

histories of castes and ethnic groups compiled by British officials for the Indian subcontinent.[24] British authorities in Kabul actively sought the cooperation of northern Afghanistan's Shia minority groups – Hazaras and Khizilbashis – in their state-building attempts. They motivated this strategy with ideas of Afghan difference and communal rivalry, actively implementing policies informed by colonial knowledge of Afghan sociology. Moreover, during the presence of the British boundary commission in Maimena between 1884 and 1887 colonial conceptions of tribal difference, understood also in terms of antagonistic ethnic groups, were employed in the commissioners' relations with the local Afghan officials and woven into the reformation of the administration of Afghanistan's north-western border areas. During colonial boundary making in northern Afghanistan, British officials took with them a range of different works on Afghan ethnography and history and referred to them in the settling of the border.[25] Historians of modern India have shown that when the colonial state collected and systematised ethnographic knowledge about the subcontinent, it reached out to native communities and individuals as partners in building the empire and in ruling it. By the late nineteenth century, some authors have argued, colonial collection of knowledge had become more systematic, while also being increasingly informed by ideas about race.[26] Ultimately, these historians have shown, the intersection of strategies of rule and administration with the collection of information about native society had a long-term impact on Indian society.[27]

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[24] Nicholas Dirks, 'The Invention of Caste: Civil Society in Colonial India', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 25 (1989): 42–52; J. (John) Muir, *Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, Their Religion and Institutions* (London: Trübner, 1868); William Wilson Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 2nd ed. (London: Trubner & Co., 1885).

[25] 'Nos. 507-528, Survey Establishment of the ABC', 1884, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.

[26] David Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, ed. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 257; Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 38–41; Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, 3rd ed (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 78; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, The New Cambridge History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43–44, 55, 113; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, First paperback ed, The New Cambridge History of India, IV, 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 119; Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', 167–68; Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[27] Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780 - 1870*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge';

In the second half of the nineteenth century the government of India used the knowledge it had generated in the previous decades in its direct interventions in Afghanistan. Hopkins has suggested that in the later nineteenth century colonial knowledge started to have an impact on Afghan society. This study takes Hopkins' assumption further and shows the ways in which colonial knowledge entered Afghan state-making and impacted it in concrete ways. In the early nineteenth century, the reach of British India's power in the subcontinent did not stretch far enough to affect the territories of the government of Kabul. With the annexation of the Punjab in 1849, Sind in 1843 and Baluchistan by 1876 the government of India had created the space to reach out into Afghanistan and engage in actual territorial expansion, as this thesis will show.[28] While there is preliminary evidence that the first Anglo-Afghan war and the Lumsden political mission of 1857 might have been similarly conducive for building British influence on Afghanistan from within, this thesis argues that only the later part of the nineteenth century produced the concrete occasions in which Anglo-Indian interference in Afghan affairs could lead to visible signs of change within the Afghan state. As chapter two will show, during the second Afghan war the government of India succeeded for the first time in concretely intervening in the local institutions of the Afghan state and engage in their reformation.

Afghanistan as a 'failed state' has been a recurrent theme of recent scholarship. Explaining his understanding of state failure in the Afghan case, Hopkins refers to the theory of the 'moral fault lines' first theorised by David Edwards. Edwards has argued that Afghan society is permeated by three 'deep-seated moral contradictions', identified with the competing moral systems of tribalism, religion and kingship. In the late nineteenth century, Edwards has shown, the Pashtun monarchy exploited these conflicting orders as a way to sustain its own legitimation to power.[29] While acknowledging that the framing of Afghanistan into a nation-state, as a result of late nineteenth century Anglo-Russian imperial competition, worked towards exacerbating the rivalry between tribes, monarchy and religious establishment, Edwards also argues that social instability had characterised Afghanistan well before.

Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Dirks, *Castes of Mind*.

[28] Nina Swidler, *Remotely Colonial: History and Politics in Balochistan* (Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014); Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[29] David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 3.

For him, as for Hopkins, the country was ridden by an inherent 'moral incoherence', which they see as the basis of the country's internal conflict.[30] While these authors have developed a sophisticated understanding of the fractures inherent in Afghan society, they have engaged only tangentially with the external influences of these fault lines, thus reinstating to a certain extent the idea of Afghanistan's internally-determined fissures. As David Washbrook has argued for colonial India, the 'way the colonialists represented and constructed knowledge about their conquered subjects', through the complex 'apparatus of imperial information gathering – censuses, ethnographies, land-settlement reports, museums' – came to imprint colonial and post-colonial policies.[31] In this process, local identities were redefined, recast and sometimes re-invented.[32]

Nicholas Dirks has argued that colonialism defined and systematised caste as the 'single term capable of expressing, organizing and above all systematizing India's diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization'.[33] This study, in contrast, shows that Afghanistan's divisions were not the result only of the region's internal history, but were significantly influenced by Afghanistan's relations with the government of India. Anglo-Afghan encounters in the second half of the nineteenth century were fertile ground for the translation of colonial ideas of Afghan sociology into the structures of the Afghan state, which in turn triggered the institutionalisation of ethnic and sectarian difference. Afghan society and its fissures were less part of this region's inherent character and more the result of modern developments embedded into this polity's close relationship with British India. Thus, Afghanistan's 'moral fault lines', as much as caste or tribe, should not be considered as permanent characters of native society but as results, to a certain extent, of British colonial intervention.

The colonial state's engagement with categorising, enumerating and systematising social categories generated a body of knowledge that could be readily

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[30] Ibid.; Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 82–83 He talks about 'competing normative orders'.
[31] D.A. Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, 1999, 599; See also Dirks, *Castes of Mind*; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.
[32] E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 5.
[33] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 5.

used in government policies. In the case of Afghanistan, as Sana Haroon has pointed out, tribe became the category through which British colonial officials understood Afghan society.[34] This project builds on the literature on colonial knowledge in the Indian subcontinent and shows that colonial sociological ideas informed British policies on the ground, but also had an afterlife in the use the government of Kabul made of them, as laid out in boundary making and institutional reform in Maimena. This project aims to overturn current assumptions – found especially in policy analysis and journalistic writing – that depict Afghanistan as a society in permanent conflict, overcome by fragmentation and tribalism, which have been perceived as the main hindrance to the emergence of national cohesiveness. It demonstrates that social fragmentation is neither an inherent feature of Afghan culture, nor a legacy of the Soviet presence, but the result of particular historical ideas and conjunctures embedded in the emergence of Afghanistan as a modern state in the late nineteenth century.

This study makes evident how important the role of British India was for the development of Afghan politics at the turn of the twentieth century, when policies around tribal and ethnic difference became a foundational part in the Afghan nationalist movement and were institutionalised and employed in large scale education and modernisation projects.[35] As William Dalrymple has recently argued with reference to the first Afghan war, British colonialism has had a far longer legacy in shaping contemporary politics of the region than we currently acknowledge. He has pointed out the striking reproduction of nineteenth century tribal power alignments within today's conflict between the central government and the Taliban, demonstrating that the nineteenth century forcefully set the path for successive developments, characterised by a remarkable degree of continuity.[36]

The many continuities between the dynamics colonialism unleashed in the Indian subcontinent and the Afghan case should make us reconsider the colonial character of Afghanistan's history in the late nineteenth century. British strategies of

[34] Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 38–52.
[35] Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929; King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973); Vartan Gregorian, 'Mahmud Tarzi and Saraj-Ol-Akhbar: Ideology of Nationalism and Modernization in Afghanistan', *The Middle East Journal* 21, no. 3 (1967): 345–68; Anthony Hyman, 'Nationalism in Afghanistan', *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 342 (2002): 299–315.
[36] William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

governance and influence-building drew heavily on the model of the Indian native states.[37] In India, from the late eighteenth century the subsidiary alliance system was an instrument for pushing often powerful successor states of the Mughal imperial power into a position of increased subordination.[38] Paramountcy became an instrument that allowed the Company to 'exercise power in the field of foreign affairs, defence, communications, and coinage on behalf of the princely states', while leaving 'the states internally autonomous'.[39]

By the second half of the nineteenth century, paramountcy had become the guiding principle for British intervention in the native states. This rubric was never clearly defined by the colonial power itself but became the instrument through which this subordination could be enforced: the East India Company and the government of India both claimed ultimate authority over native polities and the power to intervene in case of internal instability, or any other situation that might have threatened the security of the British dominions.[40] Colonial intervention was often presented as protecting native rulers against their internal and external enemies but ultimately allowed an 'unsystematic intervention in domestic affairs' of the Indian native states.[41] In the second half of the nineteenth century, as Bernard Cohn has shown, the government of India systematised the native states within a coherent and hierarchical system in which the British crown – Queen Victoria was made empress of India in 1877 – became the paramount power in substitution to the dismissed Mughal dynasty.[42] In the case of Afghanistan, paramountcy was used to refashion the government of India's relations with the amir of Kabul and push the boundary of British India into this polity.

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[37] Michael Herbert Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals* (Riverdale, Md: Riverdale Comp, 1987); Ian Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes: Paramountcy in Western India, 1857-1930* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1982); Caroline Keen, *Princely India and the British: Political Development and the Operation of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).
[38] Christopher A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[39] Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy: The Failure of Indirect Rule', *The Journal of Modern History*, 1966, 138–160., 139
[40] Ibid.; Robin Jeffrey, *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1879); Bharati Ray, *Hyderabad and British Paramountcy, 1858-1883* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes*.
[41] Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy', 139.
[42] Bernard Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

In the late 1870s, as chapter one will show, the government of India considered Afghanistan as within the reach of British paramountcy and attempted to re-make this polity into a subordinate native state. British authorities expected the amir to conform to the government of India's dictates about its regional policy and allow a British resident at his court. However, as the project of this type of British control over Afghanistan vanished at the end of the second Afghan war, the government of India devised new ways to get an inroad into the Afghan polity. The direct and indirect forms the colonial encounter with Afghanistan in the 1870s and 1880s – especially on the occasions of the second Afghan war, the boundary commissions and other forms of more indirect influence – had a crucial role in reshaping the polity's state institutions. Similar to how the relationship between the colonial state and Indian society developed, in Afghanistan British officials were able to channel colonial knowledge into the local structures of the state and thus have an impact on the development of the Afghan state and society. As chapter two will show, British intervention in Afghanistan during the second Afghan war straddled the boundary between direct and indirect rule. It took the Indian native states as a model for how to build subordinate Afghan polities in Kabul and Kandahar but reshaped it through moments of outright direct rule by British officials.

Historical scholarship on Afghanistan has been preoccupied with the question of Afghan state-building. Historians concentrated for a long time on Afghanistan's trajectory towards modernity, which saw its history as part of a teleological process of the development of Western institutional forms of governance and administration. These historians sought to determine the degree to which Afghanistan had evolved into a modern Westphalian polity and developed the main trappings of a modern state: centralised bureaucracy and standing army.[43] However, this narrative of state-making mutated into a story about the crumbling of the Afghan state in the later twentieth century. In those years, and more forcefully after the American invasion of 2001, scholars, policy makers and journalists – rarely historians – discussed Afghan history through the models of political science: of the failed, weak or rentier-state. These aimed at explaining the weakness of Afghan state structures and lack of internal cohesion, as the Soviet withdrawal had opened the way to internal

[43] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*; Georges Grassmuck, Frances H. Irwin, and Ludwig W Adamec, *Afghanistan, Some New Approaches* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969).

civil war and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1980-90s.[44] At the same time, this new perspective did not lead to a re-evaluation of the earlier development of the Afghan state. These works are largely limited by their narrow temporal frame: they tend to concentrate on contemporary history, often starting their narrative in 1919, when Afghanistan formally gained independence. Any discussion of Afghanistan in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries is often restricted to short introductions in these works and lacking any meaningful use of primary sources. Moreover, these discussions continued somehow to be locked away as a history of tension between modernising Afghan elites and a divided and backward Afghan society resisting any change of the established structures. Scholars and commentators continued to be torn between these two apparently contradictory narratives of state-building and state-failure and never quite managed to pin down a coherent narrative of how the state in Afghanistan had developed and what led to its ultimate demise.[45]

In his analysis of early nineteenth century political transformations, Hopkins, discontinuing earlier approaches informed by modernisation theory, underlines the inability of the Afghan monarchy to mould the Afghan polity to the model of the modern state. He has pointed out the teleological nature of the assumption that this would be possible or desirable at all, and suggested that the European model of the nation-state was unsuitable for thinking about the Afghan case. However, he left the question of the reasons for why this must be, open. Elsewhere, Hopkins has argued that it was precisely the model of the European state which allowed and justified the British involvement in boundary drawing and territorialisation of Afghanistan's geographical shape, which unfolded only in the 1870s.[46] However, Hopkins does not lay out the ways through which this model may have entered Afghan political culture at this early stage, adding that the government of India did not establish its 'palpable authority over territories inhabited by the Afghan tribesmen until the latter half of the

[44] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002); William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars: Second Edition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Nazif M. Shahrani, 'War, Factionalism, and the State in Afghanistan', *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (1 September 2002): 715–22.
[45] Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge South Asian Studies 39 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987).
[46] B. D. Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity: The Goldsmid Mission and the Delineation of the Perso–Afghan Border in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 2 (July 2007): 233–54; On the connections of map-making and colonialism see Edney, *Mapping an Empire*.

nineteenth century, and then only partially'.[47] The failure of the Afghan monarchy to create 'a coherent civil society or a sense of nationhood' in the early nineteenth century, decisively anticipates the transformation of Afghanistan into a Weberian state that took off only in the second half of the century, when territorial unity and centralization were progressively achieved.[48] My study shows that precise inroads can be identified through which ideas about European style statehood could be transmitted into the country. The Afghan state was for a long time unable or unwilling to conform to the model of the modern nation state, but in the first half of the nineteenth century ideas about the Westphalian state in India were not fully developed. In fact, it is questionable whether the East India Company adopted this model as a guiding principle for its state-building in the subcontinent.[49] This study takes Hopkins' argument about the implementation of a Westphalian form of the state in Afghanistan further and disentangles British approaches to this polity. British understanding of the model of the Westphalian state, as applied to its empire, were more multifaceted than outright transposition of this model suggests. In fact, despite being the architect of Afghanistan's geographical shape as a modern polity, British India did not attempt to transform it into one. As chapter four will show, at the end of the nineteenth century the government of India continued to employ, and be comfortable with, highly blurred notions of sovereignty and territoriality, which uneasily fit with the notions of a colonial state in India as a modern entity.[50]

This research builds on the critiques of colonialism of Partha Chatterjee and Ann Laura Stoler and shows how, in the case of Afghanistan, the government of India tried to maintain the Indo-Afghan border as a blurred and undefined frontier zone, rather than an international border as most of the historiography has maintained.[51] British attempts at empire-building on occasion of the second Afghan war and boundary demarcation in Maimena in the 1870-80s displayed a crucial degree of

[47] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 12.
[48] Edwards, *Heroes of the Age*, 216.
[49] Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[50] Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[51] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

continuity with earlier forms of expansion during the East India Company.[52] At the same time, during the occupation of Kabul British authorities uneasily merged the annexationist trends of the earlier Company expansion in India with the attempted establishment of embryonic forms of the institutions characteristic of formal colonialism in India: policing, land revenue, court trials, collection and systematization of knowledge, mapping.[53] The government of India steadily tried to make Afghanistan into a subordinate polity but the form this should take was never defined. Colonial officials themselves refused to box their understanding of Afghanistan's place towards and within the British empire in clearly defined categories. Indeed, they continued to use terms such as protectorate, native state, sphere of influence, buffer state interchangeably without ever laying down their exact meaning. This research shows that the ideas and strategies the colonial state applied to Afghanistan in these decades were often contradictory and undefined. In the Afghan case, thinking about imperial and colonial experiences as separate has not been productive. The complex forms the colonial encounter took in Afghanistan often straddled the boundaries between these categories.[54]

The attempt to make Afghanistan into a native polity similarly subordinated to the imperial power as the native states of India also questions mainstream narratives of the approach the colonial state took towards the native polities of the subcontinent in the aftermath of the mutiny. The Afghan case shows that the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the native states of India proclaimed in the aftermath of 1857 did not align with the actual policy adopted. In the 1870s, as Elizabeth Kolsky and Sameetah Agha have pointed out, the government of India was still trying to expand the boundaries of the empire and incorporate the native polities on its borders.[55] Not only Afghanistan, but also Baluchistan, Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kashmir were part of this, often silent and understated, move forward. In India, cases such as

[52] Stern, *The Company-State*; Ian J. Barrow and Douglas E. Haynes, 'The Colonial Transition: South Asia, 1780-1840', *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 3 (2004): 469–78.
[53] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*; Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt. India, 1857-1870* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965); David Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859-1947* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge'.
[54] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: a theoretical overview* (Princeton; Kingston: M. Wiener; Ian Randle Publishers, 1997).
[55] Sameetah Agha and Elizabeth Kolsky, eds., *Fringes of Empire: Peoples, Places, and Spaces in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the Baroda crisis of 1873-7 showed that the often ambiguous and contradictory policies adopted towards the states were clear signs of an uneasily concealed interventionist policy and a general unwillingness of the colonial state to lay out clear rules in its governance of the Indian states.[56] As part of this push forward, Afghanistan epitomised the contradictions inherent in the government of India's policies. The colonial government's attitudes towards Afghanistan show that the colonial state in India was part of the expansionist trend that characterised the British empire in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[57]

The government of India's intervention in Afghanistan should lead us to rethink 1857 as a watershed moment in the colonial history of India. From the point of view of the government of India's relations with the native states, its expansionism and use of blurred forms of sovereignty the Afghan case showed that there were significant continuities with earlier Company rule. At the same time, the government of India's approach to Afghanistan displayed significant similarities with imperial engagements with other indirectly ruled native polities, not just in India, which in turn should lead us to reconsider its place within empire-wide trends. The self-presentation of a non-interventionist state that devoted the second half of the nineteenth century to the consolidation of its domains in the subcontinent is no longer tenable when we consider that this official policy often disguised outright expansion and annexation of new territories.

Chapterisation

In chapter one I discuss the changes in the government of India's policy towards Afghanistan from 1869 to 1878. I argue that by the late 1870s the government of India understood Afghanistan as within the regional framework of the Indian princely states. Lord Lytton (viceroy, 1876-80) put increasing pressure on the amir Shere Ali Khan for British access to the amir's territories and the establishment of an Afghan residency system on the Indian example. This chapter shows that in the second half of the nineteenth century the government of India's attitude towards the native states included in its orbit was far from non-interventionist, but continued to use annexation

[56] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*; Ian Copland, 'The Baroda Crisis of 1873–77: A Study in Governmental Rivalry', *Modern Asian Studies* 2, no. 2 (March 1968).
[57] Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1995*, 3rd ed (London: Longman, 1996); Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1976).

and intervention as instruments of empire-building. It also questions the Great Game as the dominant narrative for understanding the government of India's policies towards Afghanistan in these years. It shows that geopolitical concerns over a potential Russian invasion were not central to the government of India's policy. On the contrary, within the logic of establishing British relations with the native states of the subcontinent within a hierarchical and 'feudal' system, amir Shere Ali Khan's efforts at centralising and strengthening his rule were seen as a more immediate threat to British India's security. The second Afghan war should thus not be seen as a sign of deteriorating Anglo-Russian relations but as a breaking point of Anglo-Afghan relations, unleashed by the refusal of the amir to comply with British requests of stationing a resident at his court.

Chapter two discusses the British occupation of Kabul and Kandahar during the second Afghan war (1879-81). It shows that generals Frederick Roberts and D.M. Stewart in charge of the military and political operations, were implementing a plan to break up Afghanistan into separate polities. The government of India was envisioning the creation of two states, modelled after the Indian princely states, centred around Kabul and Kandahar. Native intermediaries, especially ethnic and religious minorities such as the Hazaras and Kizilbashis, were central to British state-building: British authorities tried to make them into privileged partners in ruling Afghanistan and diffusing the opposition the occupation was facing. However, British authorities were establishing British-led administrations that mixed indirect and direct forms of governance, thus taking governance in Afghanistan beyond the template of the Indian native states. In Kabul and Kandahar, Roberts and Stewart were building the embryonic structures of a colonial state that combined the expansionist trends that had informed the East India Company's territorial acquisitions in India with the establishment of those institutions that characterised colonialism in India in its more mature form: land revenue, policing, administration of law. These experiments with colonial rule were interrupted by the withdrawal of the British forces in 1880-81. However, in the years that followed the government of India devised strategies of building indirect influence in Afghanistan.

Chapter three discusses British-led making of Afghanistan's north-western border (1884-7). It shows that the Afghan Boundary Commission (A.B.C.) became an occasion for increasing colonial interference in Afghan internal affairs, officially

denied after the end of the war. British boundary commissioner, stationed in Maimena for almost four years, actively engaged local Afghan officials and tribal chiefs and succeeded in influencing their settlement of this previously semi-independent province. These strategies of influence-building defied the official channels of British India's relations with the court of Kabul and made use of local and informal channels. The A.B.C. became the stepping stone for the delimitation of Afghanistan's borders in Turkestan, Badakhshan and Wakhan, which similarly entangled British officials and local administrators. Boundary making became the instrument through which colonial ideas of state-building and Afghan sociology could be translated into the structures of the nascent Afghan state from the bottom-up. In the long term, boundary making introduced into Afghanistan ideas of Westphalian statehood and ethnic divisions, which would inform Abdur Rahman's process of administrative reforms.

Chapter four focuses on the delimitation of the Anglo-Afghan boundary, the so-called Durand line (1893-6). It shows that, contrary to the delimitation of the Maimena border, in this case the government of India resisted the implementation of modern ideas of statehood and clear territoriality. Rather, it resisted Abdur Rahman's repeated requests of laying down an international boundary, on the model of Afghanistan's northern borders, between British India and Afghanistan. The amir was concerned that British India's constant expansion of territory and influence along the frontier – what this thesis calls a silent scramble for land – was eroding his dominions. This boundary sharply questioned the government of India's conception of Britain's own borders of the empire. The demarcation of the Durand line showed that the government of India placed its imperial boundary on Afghanistan's northern borders to Central Asia, demarcated during the 1880-90s. At the same time, the Anglo-Afghan border was seen as an internal or regional boundary, which was made into a zone of further British expansion. Afghanistan was thus seen as falling within the outer borders of the empire and thus bound to conform to a role of subordinate native polity under the paramount imperial power. Along this border, the colonial state continued to be comfortable with using blurred and undefined forms of sovereignty in the process of expanding the territories of the empire, which uneasily fit with the idea of the modern state.

In chapter five and conclusive remarks this thesis discusses the amir Abdur Rahman's annexation of Hazarajat in 1892-3, which was still a largely independent

region of central Afghanistan. The military operations conducted by the government of Kabul against the Hazaras, often understood in the literature as a sectarian war, are seen through the lens of the amir's political motivations. On the one hand, he was driven by the possibility that the long-lasting cooperation between Hazaras and the government of India – on occasion of the second Afghan war and the Afghan boundary commission – could leave the door open for a renewed attempt at military invasion – a possibility the government of India never ruled out – or other means of influence-building. On the other, the model of state-building first laid down during the demarcation of the Maimena border influenced the amir in that he employed ideas of sovereign rather than suzerain authority in the annexation of this region. Thus, the government of Kabul extended revenue relations that were part of a general trend of restructuring Kabul's relations with the provinces towards a model of direct relations managed by Afghan administrators appointed by Kabul.

The role of some key Afghan administrators in the developing structures of the Afghan state displayed a pattern of systematisation of their role as experts in building the institutions of the state in the new areas assigned to the government of Kabul through boundary making. These figures straddled the Afghan and imperial landscapes in that they had often made careers in the administration of the colonial state in India before being employed by the amir of Kabul. The conclusion points out the essential role these itinerant state-builders played in forging new administrations in the provinces, a pattern that had not yet been investigated and that needs further research. In the nineteenth century, Afghanistan was not only linked to the government of India through these Anglo-Afghan bureaucrats but was also at the centre of broader imperial connections. Many of the British officials who took part in the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar and the series of Afghan boundary commissions had highly mobile careers within the British empire. They retained appointments in Indian native states and on military expeditions, such as Burma (1885), New Zealand (1873-4), South Africa (1899-1900), which were, similarly to Afghanistan, moments of expansion or attempted expansion and empire-building. On these occasions, British officials could experiment with practices of direct and indirect rule that fed into a body of knowledge about how to govern native territories in loosely controlled areas. Strategies of governance and ideas on native sociology travelled hand-in-hand with the imperial careers of these administrators and

influenced policies on the ground in different parts of the empire. I point out how these imperial connections shed light on a form of knowledge circulation that paralleled the translation of legal codes developed in British India into other parts of the empire. In this case, circulation of ideas was informal but not less important for how the British empire expanded and was administered, something that needs further research.

Chapter one

Reconceptualising Afghanistan as an Indian princely state: the local dimension of the Great Game, 1869-78

In the second half of the nineteenth century Afghanistan, at that time a shifting assemblage of territories under the direct or indirect control of the amir of Kabul, underwent major changes. During the reigns of Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali Khan, who ruled Kabul and its dependencies intermittingly from 1826 to 1878, the polity expanded and consolidated. Dost Muhammad managed to annex Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Khulm, Kunduz and Badakhshan.[58] When he died in 1864 the state he had built disaggregated again into different smaller polities, while a four-year long struggle for the throne plunged the country into political instability. Shere Ali, who became amir in 1868, proceeded to re-annex some of the provinces that had constituted Dost Muhammad Khan's polity. Both these rulers introduced more or less successful reforms that aimed at creating a formalised state administration and standing army. Shere Ali was partially successful in restructuring the collection of revenue and modernising the army.[59]

British India, often thought of as somehow disconnected from Afghanistan's internal developments in the second half of the nineteenth century, was an integral part of these waves of consolidation and disintegration. Despite how historians have often described the 1860-70s as a period of British abstention from Afghanistan's affairs, there were many moments of close interaction.[60] On one level, the leaders of India and Afghanistan came together for political conferences and boundary commissions. On these occasions, the viceroy and his envoys negotiated Afghanistan's place within the empire and defined the extent to which Afghanistan could continue to be an independent polity, while trying to influence it in different ways. On another level, there were also less visible moments of Anglo-Afghan interactions. Amir Shere Ali Khan's process of succession to the throne in 1868 saw significant interference by the government of India, which did not directly intervene

[58] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 82.
[59] Ibid., 87–88.
[60] Barfield, *Afghanistan*; D. P. Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907. A Study in Diplomatic Relations* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1963); Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*.

in the struggle for the throne, but devised more covert means to direct Afghan politics from the outside. Thus, the 1860-70s should be seen as a formative period for Afghan history and as two decades in which the groundwork for closer Anglo-Afghan interaction were laid down, rather than a period of British India's abstention from interference and Afghanistan's isolation.

This chapter explores British India's forms of intervention and assertions of power towards Afghanistan and argues that Anglo-Afghan relations in the period between 1868 and 1878 should be understood as part of the regional framework of Indian native polities. British officials at the time drew comparisons between the princely states and Afghanistan and often thought about them as within a similar political framework. I argue that during these years, the government of India worked towards a progressive incorporation of Afghanistan into the political and epistemological framework of the Indian 'feudal order', in the words of Bernard Cohn.[61] This chapter does not suggest a straightforward identification of Afghanistan with the native states of India but suggests that many of the patterns, practices, understandings in terms of colonial influence, the exercise of imperial sovereignty and the degrees to which the government of Kabul was allowed to retain certain degree of sovereignty were formulated around the precedent set in colonial India.

The case of Afghanistan is important because it challenges the idea of the second half of the nineteenth century as a non-interventionist period in British policy towards the native polities in the region. On the contrary, it shows that annexation, intervention and expansion continued to be strategies central to the dynamics of British empire-building in the subcontinent. At the same time, such an approach reconsiders the nature of the so-called 'Great Game' or Anglo-Russian antagonism in Central Asia. Scholars have widely viewed these years through the rubric of imperial Britain's wider geopolitical concerns. The second Anglo-Afghan war in particular has been seen as the military highpoint of Anglo-Russian tensions.[62] On the contrary, here I argue that in the 1870s Anglo-Afghan relations were only partially influenced by wider geopolitical understandings. These were in no way dominant and should also be

[61] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India'.
[62] See *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80. Abridged Official Account, Produced in the Intelligence Branch, Army Headquarters, India. [Compiled by S. P. Oliver from Notes and Documents Collected by Sir Charles Macgregor, K.C.B., and Revised by F. G. Cardew. With Illustrations and Maps.]* (London: John Murray, 1908); Brian Robson, *The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War, 1878-1881* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2007).

understood within the perspective of British India's regional politics. In this sense, the Afghan war is better understood as the most visible feature of the political crisis of Anglo-Afghan relations, which had been caused by Afghanistan's reluctance to be part of the British Indian political universe.

The developments of Anglo-Afghan relations in the 1860-70s replicated the shifting relations between the government of India and the Indian princes during the second half of the nineteenth century. The government of India's approach to the princely states after the transition to crown rule in 1858 has been described as less interventionist and more 'hands-off' than that of the East India Company in the first half of the nineteenth century. Historians have argued that the transition to crown rule represented a move away from annexation as a strategy that had characterised the approach of the Company and had been blamed in part for the revolt of 1857.[63] Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, which has often been associated with this shift in India's relations with the native rulers of the subcontinent, promised to safeguard 'the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes'.[64] In the second half of the nineteenth century, the official approach was to consolidate existing possessions and avoid further expansion.[65] Michael Fisher has argued that 1857 marked the end of the period of British expansion and led to the stabilization of the government of India's relations with the Indian states.[66] Thereafter, as others have remarked, 'strong interventionism' was replaced by a 'hands-off policy' towards the princely states.[67] Thus, the new line of policy adopted in the 1860s called for the residents at the native courts to act as guarantors of the *status quo*, rather than the instruments of imperial expansion.[68] However, while officially disavowing annexation and interference, the government of India also devised new means for continuing interference in the internal affairs of the

[63] Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, The New Cambridge History of India The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 82; Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*; Keen, *Princely India and the British*.
[64] 'IOR/L/PS/18/D154, Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs and People of India', 1858, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL; Michael Herbert Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy'; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*; Keen, *Princely India and the British*; Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes*; Bhupen Qanungo, 'A Study of British Relations with the Native States of India, 1858-62', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 26, no. 2 (February 1967): 251–65.
[65] Keen, *Princely India and the British*, 17; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*.
[66] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 31, 59.
[67] Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy', 140.
[68] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 36.

states, which pointed to a more multifaceted understanding of its position *vis-à-vis* the native polities of the subcontinent.

The second half of the nineteenth century reproduced some of the tensions that had characterised earlier relations between British officials and native rulers.[69] In the period of East India Company expansion, from 1764 to 1856, officials had experimented with practices to leverage influence over many of the Mughal successor states.[70] The Company appointed British residents at local courts, who were in charge of maintaining relations between the Company and the native rulers. They progressively engineered greater degrees of interference in the internal affairs of these states.[71] In 1757 the Company defeated the *nawab* of Bengal and assumed control of the diwans of Bengal and Awadh a few years later. As Fisher has argued, 'residents preceded each wave of expansion of the Company's power'; they 'guided the surviving states into line with Company policy'.[72] In this period these figures were instrumental in bringing vast areas under the control of the British.[73] At the same time, the extension of the residency system did not automatically mean the extension of indirect rule, and the Company's policy entailed a persistent tension between direct and indirect forms of rule.[74] As pointed out by Charles Metcalf in 1825, at that time resident at the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, 'our duty requires that we should support the legitimate succession of the Prince, while policy seems to dictate that we should as much as possible abstain from any further interference in their affairs'.[75] Thus, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, phases of expansion and consolidation of Company rule over Indian territories often co-existed and entailed changing degrees of interventionism in the states.[76] Barbara Ramusack has notably argued that during the Company Raj, 'intervention and non-intervention as British policies persisted in close association', making a strict periodization in phases difficult.[77] Similarly, in the case of Afghanistan the co-existence of attempts at incorporating this polity with proclamations of non-interference should lead us to reconsider the value of dividing British India's policy into phases of 'masterly

[69] Ibid., 29, 445.
[70] Ibid., 29.
[71] Copland, *The British Raj and the Indian Princes*, 56–57.
[72] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 30.
[73] Ibid., 30, 52.
[74] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 58.
[75] Cited in ibid., 55.
[76] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 58, 407–10.
[77] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 56.

inactivity' and 'forward policy' policies.[78] Different and often contrasting policy lines overlapped, making a strict periodization along officially-stated policies misleading.

From the early 1870s, the ambiguity that had come to characterise post-mutiny relations between the government of India and the native states around intervention and non-intervention played an important role in the definition of the government's relations with Afghanistan and a number of smaller polities along British India's north-western border.[79] British relations with Khelat, Kashmir, Gilgit and Chitral started to be modelled on the system of the native states of India: the government of India tried to extend imperial paramountcy, turning them into dependent native states. In the long-run, British India succeeded in annexing Khelat and installing agencies in the other polities. Thus, the policies pursued in these years fundamentally questioned the notion of a non-interventionist and non-expansionist colonial state. They also showed that intervention was not restricted to the subcontinent but was employed beyond its borders. By 1878, Afghanistan had been included in this group of native polities and the government of India was attempting to extend its influence over it.

Elizabeth Kolsky and Sameetah Agha have pointed out that 'the historical literature on British colonial expansion in India' has disproportionately focused on 'the conventional narrative about British territorial expansion' that includes the progressive incorporation of Bengal, Mysore, the Deccan, Punjab and Sindh. Kolsky and Agha have questioned the little attention historians have paid to 'the notoriously unstable borders to the northwest and northeast, the disastrous forays into

[78] See Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia.* (London: John Murray, 1875); Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*; Yapp, *Strategies of British India*.
[79] G. J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95. A Study in Imperial Policy*, Imperial Studies Series (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1963).

The Russian advances in Central Asia[80]

Afghanistan, and the military clashed with the people of Assam and Burma'.[81] The shift in Anglo-Afghan relations between 1869 and 1878 towards an increasingly interventionist policy should lead us to question colonial expansionism in India as a phenomenon limited to the Company's early conquests. On the contrary, expansion should include the 'transfers of territory' that occurred after 1857 and which did not only concern minor cases such as Cooch Berar, Benares and Swat.[82] In fact, the increased interference in the internal affairs of the polities along the Indo-Afghan border implied their gradual incorporation into the imperial framework. The Afghan districts of Pishin, Sibi and Kurram, together with the Khyber pass, were occupied during the Afghan war of 1879 and permanently added to British India's possessions. At the same time, the government debates on the extension of military operations into mainland Afghanistan demonstrated that annexation continued to be a strong possibility. As will be argued below, in this process, practices of indirect rule often co-existed uneasily with the possibility of annexation.

The Afghan case suggests a re-evaluation of the practices of direct and indirect rule. It shows that in the 1870s these practices frequently overlapped and were used alternately in those areas that were not formally part of the empire. As chapter two shows, the British occupation of Kabul and Kandahar between 1878 and 1881, employed both direct and indirect forms of rule, sometimes at the same time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, colonial practices of governance towards the native polities did not bring about a radical break with the Company's practices of expansion and often witnessed the continued tension between overt intervention and indirect rule. Ramusack argues that after the revolt, 'while the British would no longer use annexations or fear of annexations to intimidate princes, they had no intention of relinquishing their right to intervene in princely states to secure their imperial interests'.[83] For example, the case of the so-called Baroda crisis of 1873-7 shows that the colonial state was unable or unwilling to delineate clear rules in its governance of the Indian states.[84] The varied and arbitrary application of the prerogatives of the imperial power on these polities demonstrated that paramountcy worked as an

[80] Martin Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia: Confrontation and Negotiation, 1865-1895*, Central Asian Studies (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), fig. Map 1.
[81] Agha and Kolsky, *Fringes of Empire*, 10.
[82] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 106.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*; Copland, 'The Baroda Crisis of 1873–77: A Study in Governmental Rivalry'.

umbrella for selective colonial intervention. In these years, governmental interference in the internal affairs of the states largely persisted in its early nineteenth century blurred ambivalence between different degrees of interference. In this form it was extended to new native polities in the subcontinent and the empire during the 1870s.

The uncertain nature of colonial intervention in native polities in the second half of the nineteenth century highlighted the fundamental ambiguity of what native sovereignty was to mean in practice and where the boundaries of imperial paramountcy were to be drawn. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, native polities had been allowed varying degrees of sovereignty. The example of Hyderabad in the early nineteenth century showed that the British were perceived as the dominant power who managed to restrain Hyderabad in its diplomatic relations with other regional sovereign polities. They restricted the state's 'foreign relations' – the term was used in colonial sources – to interaction with the East India Company only. Nonetheless, Ramusack points out, the states' rulers continued to exercise 'significant sovereign rights'. These included the right to collect taxes and the exercise of legal jurisdiction over the states' inhabitants.[85] While scholars have pointed out that between 1760 and 1947 the definition of sovereignty changed, they also acknowledge that 'the issue of sovereignty remained unresolved throughout the entire history of the relations between Indian Rulers and the EIC and then the British Crown'.[86] Throughout the British presence in India the Company first and the government of India later were never able to 'apply any exact definition of the term "sovereignty" to the Indian rulers'. The classification of these polities shifted according to the changing needs of colonial rule.[87] Similarly, in the case of Afghanistan, British intervention balanced the amir's sovereignty with the extension of different layers of imperial paramountcy. The government of India never aimed to fully erase the amir's sovereign position but tried to find ways to impose its influence and limit his independence in different ways.

Scholarship on late nineteenth century Afghanistan has commonly referred to this period in terms of the 'Great Game' or rivalry between Britain and Russia in Central Asia. It has focused on the different phases of Anglo-Russian relations and how they affected Anglo-Afghan interactions. These have been more projects of

[85] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 63.
[86] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*.
[87] Ibid., 443.

imperial history, detailing imperial rivalries, frontier defence, the government of India's security and Russia's unjustified expansionism.[88] Such historiography has reduced Anglo-Afghan relations between 1869 and 1878 to the rubric of Anglo-Russian competition in Central Asia. It has stressed how the dynamic of the 'forward policy' led the government of India to react to every Russian advance with a similar counter-response. Thus, acts such as the annexation of Khelat and the occupation of Quetta in 1876 have been seen in this light.[89] Sayed Qassem Reshtia for example has argued that the 'occupation of Baluchistan and the establishment of a military base in Quetta' were directly dictated by the 'fear of the Russian occupation of Merv'.[90] In this type of analysis, Afghanistan is barely visible and assumed the role of a 'pawn' between two competing empires.[91]

More recent works have reconsidered the role of the Russian threat in guiding British policies towards the region and Afghanistan in particular. Zalmay Gulzad, although he acknowledges that the Russian threat was 'on all accounts, an exaggeration created by circumstances in Europe and manipulated by British politicians', continues to stress that 'Anglo-Afghan relations were […] guided by the policy of containing the Russian threat'.[92] However, what is still missing in this literature is an analysis of how the imperial rivalry was tied in with the regional policy of British India. Recent accounts have stressed the impact Anglo-Russian relations had on the empire as a whole but they have not been related to British India's own policies towards the native polities on its borders. This chapter, in contrast, questions the role of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the development of British policies towards Afghanistan. A closer look at the regional rather than the imperial dimension shows that British India's policies towards Afghanistan, as towards the other polities on the Indo-Afghan frontier, were only partially directed by the broad considerations around 'empire' but were more often the result of local dynamics. The government of India's policies were informed by considerations about British India's territorial expansion and the consolidation of its frontier towards Afghanistan as much as they had been in

[88] Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1992); Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*; Christopher Wyatt, *Afghanistan and the Defence of Empire: Diplomacy and Strategy During the Great Game* (London; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011); Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*.
[89] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 320–27.
[90] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 93.
[91] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 33.
[92] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 105.

the case of the Company expansion into new Indian territory. Thus, while Anglo-Russian rivalry did play a role in defining British India's policies, it should be read against the framework of the government of India's interaction with the native polities at the regional level. This perspective allows us to reconsider the role of the 'Great Game': to understand Afghanistan as integral part of the system of native states questions the long-held assumption that the deterioration of the relations between the government of Kabul and British India was a direct consequence of increased imperial tension. Thus, while this chapter acknowledges that for many administrators and commentators at the time Russia's expansionism seemed a concrete menace for the security of the British Indian empire, it also suggests that in the 1870s the government of India's policies towards its north-western border were dictated by regional and local consideration.

This chapter delineates the trajectory of Anglo-Afghan relations from the late 1860s to the start of the second Afghan war in 1878. It discusses the government of India's changing understanding and policy towards Afghanistan: in these years the government of India transformed Afghanistan from a semi-independent polity on British India's borders into a subordinate native state within the framework of the British Indian empire. The first section of the chapter looks at the 1869 Anglo-Afghan political conference in Ambala as a moment of change in the government of India's relations with the amir. This event is inserted into a wider narrative that addresses British understanding of Afghan 'independence' as a shifting and negotiable term, which was used by the government of India to describe different degrees of relations with the native polities on its north-western border. The second part discusses the contradictions inherent in the shift towards greater intervention in Afghanistan. After the Ambala conference the government of India progressively moved towards requesting the amir Shere Ali Khan for closer relations and a permanent British presence in his territories. This did not come without internal contestation. In fact, the government debates show that the viceroy's council was deeply divided over the reasons for a change of policy towards Afghanistan and many argued that pressuring the amir was unjustified. The third part discusses how the developments in Anglo-Afghan relations in these years were part of the government of India's regional, rather than imperial, political understanding. The changed policy towards Afghanistan pursued around the mid-1870s was only partially informed by considerations around

Russia's threat to British India's security. On the contrary, the 'local dimension of the Great Game' shows that considerations around Afghanistan's internal political instability and its growing standing army were equally important in defining the new line of Afghanistan policy. The last section discusses the turn the policy of the government of India took under Lytton's viceroyalty. Between 1876 and 1878, the quest for closer Anglo-Afghan relations started to be concretised by the viceroy. The government of India increasingly referred to the system of the native states of India as the template for designing strategies to incorporate Afghanistan closer into the empire. In this light, the amir's refusal to allow access to British residents was seen as an act of open hostility and rebellion, one that defied Afghanistan's place within the system of Indian native states under British paramountcy.

Shifting Anglo-Afghan relations: negotiating Afghan 'independence' at the 1869 Ambala conference

In the late 1860s and early 1870s the government of India redefined its relations with Afghanistan. The Ambala conference of 1869, the Seistan boundary arbitration of 1870-1 and the meeting at Simla between the viceroy and the amir's representatives progressively bound the two polities closer together.[93] Historians have largely seen this as a period of British non-interference. British India's policies towards its north-western border have been described as 'masterly inactivity', pointing to British India's 'strict and scrupulous neutrality' towards the internal affairs of Afghanistan.[94] British India's official policy aimed at maintaining Afghanistan as an independent policy and a 'buffer zone' between the British and the Russian empires. Officially, this was a 'policy of containment' towards Russian expansion in Central Asia, which by 1875 had advanced to Bukhara, Tashkent, Khiva and Samarkand.[95] However, historians have largely focused on signs of official interaction between the two governments, neglecting less obvious markers of British India's strategies of influencing the Afghan polity. Despite the proclamations of non-interference, a set of practices and political relationships were being established during this period that had tangible effects on Afghanistan's internal dynamics. The understanding of Afghanistan in the inter-war years as a 'buffer state', in which British India did not

[93] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 301–2.
[94] Gulzad, *External Influences*; Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, 22–24, 75.
[95] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*; Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 8, 12; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 67; Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, 14–15.

have any direct interference, has limited the problematizing of British India's strategies in the region that did not rely on military force or direct intervention.[96] The government of India's indirect influence on Afghanistan's political developments questions the meaning of British India's policy of 'masterly inactivity' and 'forward policy'. Gulzad has pointed out that from 1854, when Khelat became 'a vassal of British India', the British gradually extended their military posts into the north-west frontier among the Pushtun tribes, advancing India's borders.[97] Thus, the categorisation of British policies in 'masterly inactivity' and 'forward policy' has often let to an oversimplification. Historians have not yet addressed and problematized the nuances underlying the different phases of British policy towards its north-western border border, and have reduced Afghanistan to the analytical category of the 'buffer state'. [98] The policies pursued by the government of India while officially maintaining a policy of 'inactivity' show that proclamations of non-interference often entailed significant indirect means of influence-building.

The perspective of Afghanistan as an 'intermediary' zone between two empires, whose internal relations should not be interfered with, has overshadowed the fact that British India's interest in Afghanistan was far from neutral.[99] As the viceroy pointed out in September 1867:

> Our relations should always be with the *de facto* ruler of the day, and so long as the *de facto* ruler is not unfriendly to us, we should always be prepared to renew with him the same terms and favourable conditions as obtained under his predecessor. In this way we shall be enabled to maintain our influence in Afghanistan far more effectually than by any advance of troops, a contingency which could only be contemplated in the last resort which would unite as one the Afghan tribes against us, and which would paralyze our finances.[100]

British India's attitudes towards Afghanistan during this period reveal a more multifaceted approach. In fact, while proclaiming a full hands-off policy towards Afghanistan, British India did intervene in its internal affairs. A case in point was the government of India's role in Shere Ali Khan's succession to the amirship in 1868. The death of amir Dost Muhammad Khan in 1864 triggered internal political unrest in

[96] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907,* 8.
[97] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 76.
[98] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 45; Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 8.
[99] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 85–88.
[100] 'Memoranda (Collection A and B) Afghanistan, Baluchistan and N.W. Frontier' quoted in Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 8.

which different contenders to the throne tried to impose themselves.[101] In the years between 1864 and 1868, the government of India refused to provide financial or military support for Shere Ali, but indirectly supported Afzal Khan, Dost Mohammed's eldest son, and his brother Azam Khan, and formally recognised both as amirs.[102] At the same time, in 1868 they debarred Shere Ali Khan, then in control of Herat, from entering into a political alliance with Persia, threatening him with support of his opponents.[103] As Reshtia has pointed out, during the struggle for the throne, the British government 'extended *de facto* recognition to any authority strong enough to control any given territory', thus indirectly influencing the process of succession.[104] Thus, often the professed hands-off approach of British India was more complicated than simple non-interference. The case of Shere Ali's succession shows that the government of India devised strategies for building its influence and increasing the amir's dependence on its neighbour, which were incorporated into a radical shift in British India's policy.

The 1869 meeting in Ambala between the amir Shere Ali Khan and the viceroy Lord Mayo was a crucial moment for redefining Anglo-Afghan relations towards a more interventionist attitude. This meeting was held shortly after Shere Ali had become the new amir of Afghanistan and was aimed at formally recognising him as ruler. However, contrary to its previous policy of veiled support of Afghanistan's rulers, in March 1869 the government of India did not only recognise Shere Ali as *de facto* amir but tried to link his political destiny more closely to British India.

Historians have often viewed this meeting as the ultimate confirmation of British India's policy of non-interference and its recognition of Afghanistan as an independent country.[105] However, the conference was more than a mere diplomatic meeting. Gulzad points to the fact that, by that time, Shere Ali had realised that 'British India's friendship was necessary for any government of Afghanistan to succeed'.[106] Historians have thus far not analysed the reasons for the government of Kabul's almost necessary 'friendship' of the government of India, although some have pointed to the fact that dwindling economic opportunities drew Afghanistan

[101] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 281.
[102] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 7.
[103] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 281.
[104] Ibid., 279.
[105] Ibid., 286–92.
[106] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 68.

towards increased reliance on relations with colonial India.[107] It can further be hypothesised that by 1869 British India's progressive territorial acquisitions in the north-west had meant the ruler in Kabul had to recognise British supremacy in the region. In Ambala, the amir wanted to secure what for him seemed essential support from the government of India, while the latter wanted to assert a position of greater influence over the Afghan polity. The Ambala meeting inaugurated a new phase of Anglo-Afghan relations. While the implications of the changes it initiated became evident only in the late 1870s, the negotiations at Ambala reflected the different layers and modalities of British influence-building over Afghan politics in Kabul, Kandahar and the frontier region. At the same time, they also reveal significant changes in the amir's attitude towards his neighbour.

At the meeting, Shere Ali specifically requested his British interlocutors to recognise his position as ruler in Kabul and his dynasty as the legitimate and hereditary holders of the throne. In the private interview with the viceroy, the amir strongly urged that:

> The British Government should abandon its policy of assisting the Ruler de facto and of acknowledging the actual possessor of the throne. [This] line of action invited aggression from every competitor and had thus subjected Afghanistan to an internal warfare of some four years duration.[108]

The amir pressed the government of India to 'recognise and acknowledge not only himself but his lineal successors, as successors in blood'.[109] In other words, he was asking for a formal legitimization of his dynasty. The Ambala conference inaugurated a different British policy towards Afghanistan, which was more interventionist than that pursued by Lord Lawrence (viceroy, 1864-8) during the previous decade.[110] The viceroy recognised Shere Ali Khan as the *de facto* ruler of the country, 'without undertaking inconvenient liabilities' on the amir's behalf and 'abstaining from active interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan'.[111] In a second moment, he

[107] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*.
[108] 'Add Ms 7490/42/26, Private Meeting between H.E. the Viceroy and H.H. the Ameer of Cabul at 4 P.M., March 29th 1869', n.d., Manuscripts, Cambridge University Archive [Emphasis in original].
[109] Ibid.
[110] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 307.
[111] 'Nos. 910-911, British Policy towards Afghanistan', December 1878, 911(5), Foreign Department, SS, NAI.

'recognised Shere Ali as the *de jure* as well as *de facto* ruler of that country' during an official *durbar* held in Ambala.[112]

That the amir so strongly needed the colonial government's *de jure* recognition of his dynasty reflected the government of India's role as the dominant regional power. From the conversations taking place at Ambala, it seems that besides being a powerful neighbour, British India was also identified as an important source of legitimation by the amir. Shere Ali believed that the civil war that had accompanied his accession to the amirship had been the result of the government of India's refusal to recognise him as the legitimate ruler on Dost Muhammad Khan's death. He complained that the government of India had fomented the civil war by prematurely recognising his opponents as amirs, thus undermining his chances.[113] Shere Ali's concern reflected the position shared at this point by Afghan elites that British Indian was the main regional power. As Singhal puts it, 'Shere Ali, having carefully reviewed his position, realised the inevitability of accepting closer and more subordinate relations with one of the other of the two great powers', either Britain or Russia.[114] The amir's appeal to the viceroy for recognition of his position demonstrated the degree to which the government of India had now to be taken into account in Afghan politics.[115] In this sense, the Ambala meeting represented a break with the past and showed that Afghanistan's political destiny was increasingly interlinked with British India's regional policy. From the point of view of the amir, by the end of the 1860s, the government of India had become a powerful source of legitimation for the rulers of Afghanistan.

With the *de jure* recognition of Shere Ali Khan, British India became the guarantor of his office as amir of Kabul, as well as of Afghan political stability throughout the 1870s. As part of this new strategy, Mayo pushed the amir to strengthen his rule internally. He remarked to the amir that:

> The tranquillity of the country, which the Viceroy had at heart, would be the natural consequence of the security of his power and of his dynasty, and that all things (including the increase of trade which results from the prosperity and wealth of a nation) which the British Government might desire, would

[112] Ibid., 911(6).
[113] 'Add. Ms 7490/42, Richard Bourke, 6th Earl of Mayo: Papers. Foreign and Native States. Meeting with Amir of Kabul', May 1869, 27, Cambridge University Archive.
[114] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 11.
[115] 'Add Ms 7490/42/26'.

> follow from the establishment of a firm and permanent administration, as a natural consequence.[116]

The government of India was pushing the amir to consolidate his rule in Kabul and in those areas that had been lost to the government's control during the succession to the throne. To this end, he was given a subsidy of 600,000 Rupees and military equipment consisting of around 12,000 guns.[117] Mayo remarked to Shere Ali that he hoped that 'on his return to his own country he may be enabled speedily to establish his legitimate rule over his entire kingdom: to consolidate his power to create a form and merciful administration in every province of Afghanistan, to promote commerce and secure peace and tranquillity within his borders'.[118] On this point, the maharaja of Gwalior remarked that 'without [British help] Shere Ali could not stand and with it he will not be able to keep down Abdul Rahman in Turkestan'.[119] The government of India was instrumental in providing Shere Ali with the resources to consolidate his position. British India's policy of supporting the government of Kabul with money and military equipment made Afghanistan increasingly dependent on its imperial neighbour.

The government of India encouraged, and partially enabled the amir to strengthen his rule and extend his authority over more territory. Its support to the amir's authority triggered British insertion into the local relations of power. The government of India urged the amir to consolidate his rule over Turkestan – which was then under the control of Abdur Rahman Khan, Shere Ali's nephew and future amir – Badakhshan and Wakhan. The meeting at Ambala seemed to have afforded Shere Ali sufficient political legitimacy to assert his position as suzerain in northern Afghanistan. Significantly, soon after the meeting, the government of India received the news that 'all the Sirdars [were] anxious to give in allegiance to Shere Ali, including [the] Meer of Badakhshan, the staunch adherent of Azim Khan' and former claimant of the throne who was at that time ruling over Turkestan. The news also reported that 'Mohamed Ishak Khan, son of Azim Khan, [had] fled across the Oxus'.[120] Subsequently, it was reported that the *mir* of Badakhshan, who had given

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 290–92.
[118] 'Add Ms 7490/42/33, Telegram from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State Dated Umballa 3 April 1869', n.d., Manuscripts, Cambridge University Archive.
[119] 'Add Ms 7490/42/14, Letter from H.D. Daly to W. Seton-Karr, Dated Indore 23 March 1869', n.d., Manuscripts, Cambridge University Archive.
[120] 'Add. Ms 7490/42', 40.

his allegiance to the amir, was collecting a large army with the goal of conquering Turkestan on behalf of the government of Kabul.[121] The amir himself attributed the submission of the Mirs of Badakhshan to the influence of the conference at Ambala in strengthening his position within Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* his political opponents.[122] Thus, the meeting at Ambala had more than diplomatic consequences. Both colonial and Afghan evidence suggests that the meeting itself and the agreement made in it had direct implications for the course of the internal politics of Afghanistan.[123] The support shown by a range of regional chiefs in Afghanistan for Shere Ali thus challenges the conventional understanding of British India's non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. It suggests that a link existed between Shere Ali's state-building programme and British India's increasing influence in the region.

The government of India's support to Shere Ali testified to its will to increase its involvement in Afghanistan. At the same time, it also displayed a fundamental contradiction between its extension of indirect influence over Afghanistan and its support of Afghanistan as an 'independent polity'. As the viceroy pointed out:

> Although the British Government does not desire to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan, yet considering the renewed bond of union between the two countries, the Government would view with severe displeasure any attempt of his Rivals to disturb his position […], and will further endeavour from time to time by such means as circumstances may require to strengthen His Highness Government, to enable him to exercise his rightful rule with equity and justice.[124]

The Ambala meeting did not only supply the means for the consolidation of the amir's rule, but it also inaugurated a season of increased and more active government interference in Afghan politics, although it remained couched in ambiguous terms. Mayo remarked that 'the Ameer […] has further assured me of his anxious desire to consolidate a firm and temperate Government, open out trade, assist in controlling the Frontier Tribes, and otherwise acting in complete confidence and compliance with the wishes of the British Government'.[125] While the amir offered the government of India

[121] Ibid., 46.
[122] Ibid., 41.
[123] Fayẓ Muḥammad Kātib Hazārah, *The History of Afghanistan: Fayz Muhammad Katib Hazarah's Siraj Al-Tawarikh*, ed. R. D. McChesney and Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013).
[124] 'Add Ms 7490/42/33'.
[125] Ibid.

increased cooperation on key issues, such as the management of the frontier, and assurance of his compliance with British advice, at the same time the viceroy also pointed out the hands-off approach of his government. Mayo stated that 'the Ameer […] has been clearly informed, through his ministers, that under no circumstances will British Officers or Envoys be sent to Afghanistan to aid him, [that] no direct subsidy can be given but that assistance will be offered from time to time as circumstances require'.[126] A decade later, Lord Cranbrook, from April 1878 secretary of state for India, acknowledged that a shift had happened during Mayo's office in the attitudes towards Afghanistan. He stated that, while Mayo 'did not deviate, in any material degree, from the attitude of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, which had been so long maintained', he nonetheless introduced an element of discontinuity.[127] Thus, during Mayo's viceroyalty the government of India maintained a blurred and ambiguous position towards Afghanistan, which united an official policy of non-interference with increasing indirect influence.

The policy pursued by British India in the last few years had consciously used blurred strategies of sovereignty towards the polities on the north-western border and Afghanistan, which British India had always avoided to formalize in a treaty. In contrast, Shere Ali's insistence on the recognition of his dynasty, advocated since 1869, was part of his request for more formalised relations. In 1875 the viceroy Lord Northbrook (1872-6) had remarked that the insistence on a more tangible British presence in Afghanistan would trigger new requests on the part of the amir for an 'unconditional promise of protection against foreign attack', which had already been part of the negotiations in 1873. The viceroy argued that there were 'grave objections against binding the British Government by such an obligation' which would involve the stipulation of a treaty.[128] As will be seen in chapters two and four, leaving the terms of Anglo-Afghan relations undetermined and British India unbound by any form of formal agreement was integral part of Lord Lytton's (viceroy, 1876-80) and, during the negotiations for the Indo-Afghan border, Henry Mortimer Durand's strategy. On the occasion of the delineation of the Durand Line (1893-97) this indeterminacy allowed British India to manage varying degrees of interference on the

[126] Ibid.
[127] 'Nos. 910-911', 911(5).
[128] 'Nos. 125-126, Proposed Establishment of a British Mission in Afghanistan', January 1877, 126 (12), Foreign Department, Secret, NAI.

frontier – political and territorial – adapting to changing contingencies. Similarly, in the late 1870s Northbrook denied the expediency of encouraging the amir to engage in any reciprocal treaty agreement with British India, which for him would be 'inapplicable to the present conditions of affairs'.[129]

While in 1869 the government of India was working towards increasing its influence in Afghanistan, its strategies and the goals it tried to achieve were very different from those that would characterise the later 1870s, when officials pursued an outright extension of British power. Gulzad rightly points out that Mayo's decisions at the Ambala meeting displayed British India's 'colonial agenda' in so far as they 'viewed the Khanate of Khelat and the country of Afghanistan as having parallel relationships towards them'.[130] As mentioned above, the government of India had been progressively expanding its influence and territorial acquisition into its north-western border throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and Khelat became a very important ground of experimentation for British policies in the region.[131] In the government debates that preceded the final phases of deteriorating Anglo-Afghan relations in 1877-8, British officials often grouped Khelat and Afghanistan together as examples of British strategies of paramountcy-building. However, Gulzad's claim that in 1869 Mayo already 'implicitly expressed Britain's intention to reduce Afghanistan's status virtually to that of the princely states of India' seems premature.[132] Thus, Mayo viewed the position of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* British India in a similar way as Khelat. Accordingly, he envisioned the progressive establishment of British influence in Afghan affairs in a similar way as had been done in Khelat.

However, at this point Afghanistan was not yet inserted into the wider political project that incorporated the frontier states into the system of Indian native states, as would be the case during the Lytton viceroyalty. The 1869 Ambala meeting displayed the start of an ambiguous strategy which saw continuous proclamations of Afghanistan's 'independence' and British non-interference co-existing with informal means of influence-building. While these partially mimicked the practices the British had adopted in India towards the native polities, they were not yet openly devised in

[129] Ibid.
[130] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 86.
[131] Magnus Marsden and Benjamin Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (London: Hurst, 2011).
[132] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 86.

these terms. In fact, as Mayo remarked in June 1869, British India should maintain the power to 'recognise and secure [the] independence [of Afghanistan and Khelat], but to continue to exercise over them friendly influence with an *unquestioned* power of punishing them or their subjects if they misbehaved'.[133] The relation he envisioned did not entail full-fledged subordination, as the Lytton policy would later require Afghanistan to comply with, but was based on the possibility for the colonial state to police and punish the population on the frontier if necessary.

A paradigmatic shift in British India's policy towards Afghanistan: the quest for closer colonial interference, 1875-8

To a certain extent Northbrook continued to personify the ambiguous idea of blurred Afghan 'independence' first implemented by Mayo, for which the country was to be maintained *de jure* independent but *de facto* under the sway of British India. On the contrary, Lytton and Salisbury, secretary of state for India from 1874 to 1878 and then foreign secretary during Lytton's viceroyalty, viewed Anglo-Afghan relations more closely through the lens of the practices of indirect rule the British had established in India. Both figures advocated the maintenance of British influence over the government of Kabul and the creation of an Afghan residency system. As will be seen below, for Northbrook this type of indirect influence was to continue to be upheld as integral part of British policy, while Salisbury and Lytton saw the necessity of a physical British presence.

The years that followed the Ambala conference saw the further evolution of the policy elaborated on that occasion. Figures such as Salisbury, Lytton, and also Alfred Lyall, Harry Lumsden, Lepel Griffin, Frederick Roberts, Robert Sandeman and Pierre Louis Cavagnari ultimately fostered the progressive placement of Afghanistan on a different position *vis-à-vis* British India, which led to a new conceptualization of this polity. These actors became pivotal to the ambitions of the government of India in Afghanistan during the 1870s and maintained a central role until the end of the century. In the long-term, they were responsible for concretising the government of India's policies towards Afghanistan, both at the imperial metropoles and on the ground in Afghanistan. The policy this group of personalities devised from the 1870s onwards suggested a changing conceptualization of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* British

[133] Cited in Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*, 301.

India.[134] They progressively abandoned the idea of an imperfect Afghan 'independence' that had been at the centre of the Ambala conference. They suggested a changed understanding of Anglo-Afghan relations that was no longer centred on graded layers of influence, but pushed for a more tangible British presence in Kabul. In fact, during the first part of the 1870s the government of India pushed for more substantial forms of colonial intervention.

Lord Salisbury, secretary of state for India (1874-8), took the first step in the direction of a revamped Afghanistan policy that started to concretise the government of India's more interventionist stance. At the end of 1875, Salisbury wrote to Northbrook advocating the need to '[establish British India's] relations with the Amir upon a more satisfactory footing'.[135] The debate that ensued reflected the divergence in opinion between the viceroy and the secretary of state on the degree of British influence and interference in Afghanistan. At the same time, the exchange highlighted the different understanding the two governments entertained of what ought to be the best means for continuing relations with the government of Kabul.

From August 1875 the debate between London and Calcutta settled on the question of sending a British agent to Afghan territory. Salisbury urged the viceroy to 'find some occasion for sending a mission to Kabul' with the objective of placing a 'British Agent in the country'.[136] His plan envisioned the stationing of 'British officers upon the frontier of Afghanistan', especially in Herat and Kandahar.[137] The viceroy was therefore instructed to negotiate the deployment of 'a temporary embassy in [the amir's] capital' as a first step towards the 'establishment of a permanent mission within his dominions'.[138] However, in his reply to the orders coming from the government in London, the viceroy expressed a quite different view. While he agreed that a British resident at Herat would be a useful measure, he pointed out that the amir was 'most unwilling to receive British officers as Residents in Afghanistan'.[139] In his understanding, the amir's 'reluctance [was] consistent with his loyal adherence to the interests of the British Government'.[140] Pressing on the government of Kabul the

[134] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 88.
[135] 'Nos. 125-126', 125 (15).
[136] Ibid., 125 (16, 11).
[137] Ibid., 125,126.
[138] Ibid., 125 (11, 15).
[139] Ibid., 125 (3), 126 (5).
[140] Ibid., 125 (5).

necessity of establishing a 'British Agency at Herat or Kandahar' deviated, he argued, 'from the patient and conciliatory policy which had hitherto guided our relations with Afghanistan'.[141] In the words of Northbrook, the government of India did not 'share to the full extent [London's] apprehension' and urged the secretary to reconsider its line of policy. He pointed out 'the serious objections to the scheme' of deploying British agents into the land.[142] In his opinion 'the advantages to be gained from the presence of British officers on the Afghan frontier depended entirely upon the cordial concurrence of the Amir, and would not be secured by his reluctant assent after pressure put on him by us'.[143] For the viceroy, 'the proposal to establish British Agents in Afghanistan [was] a departure from the understanding arrived at between Lord Mayo and the Amir at the Umballa conference of 1869'.[144] He resisted any deviation from the government's policy of 'complete abstention from interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan'.[145]

In Northbrook's opinion the behaviour of the amir was perfectly in line with the friendly relations between Afghanistan and British India at that time and he did not envisage the necessity of forcing upon the amir a foreign mission. While Northbrook's strategy entailed degrees of informal influence-building, his aversion to the stationing of British agents in Afghan territories displayed the dichotomy of understanding Anglo-Afghan relations that was unfolding in those years. For the viceroy, a resident in Afghanistan was not required. Northbrook continued to advocate a policy of formally respecting Afghan independence. At the same time, Salisbury's insistence on a British resident was the first step in a paradigmatic change of British understanding of the Afghan polity, which would find its full expression during the Lytton viceroyalty. In 1875 the debate between Salisbury and Northbrook thus turned on the meaning of Afghan 'independence'.

Northbrook pointed out that since 1869 'the Amir [had] unreservedly accepted and acted upon our advice to maintain a peaceful attitude towards his neighbours', thus acknowledging British influence on Afghanistan's relations in the region. In his view, the new line of policy suggested by Salisbury did not take into account the amir's 'unqualified acceptance […] of our advice in his dealings' with the

[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., 126 (5, 22).
[143] Ibid., 126 (5).
[144] Ibid., 126 (7).
[145] Ibid., 126 (8).

polities surrounding Afghanistan.[146] Northbrook maintained that the change of policy suggested from London would have the effect of weakening the influence so far gained in the country by British India. He argued that it was:

> manifestly important to avoid anything which might lead him to doubt the correctness of the assurances repeatedly and advisedly given him, or might have the effect of unsettling his mind and of weakening the influence which we have for many years successfully exercised at Kabul in the interest of peace.[147]

The viceroy believed the new course could cause collision between the 'amir and the frontier tribes or with the allies of Russia' on Afghanistan's northern border and could compromise the 'independence of Afghan territories'.[148]

Lord Northbrook, as Lord Mayo before him, embodied a vision of Afghan 'independence' which was far from considering the polity as actually independent but which underscored means of veiled and more or less informal influence-building, as the case of the succession of Shere Ali to the amirship in 1868 had shown. Both Northbrook and Salisbury advocated that British influence over the government of Kabul and its dependent territories should be maintained. However, they fundamentally differed in the ways this influence should be concretized. The dichotomy that was emerging from the changes in policy approach highlighted the contradictions in the meaning of 'independence' and 'non-interference'. The government of India continued to advocate Afghanistan's independence throughout the last decades of the century. However, the meaning of this label changed over time and adapted to Salisbury and Lytton's arguments for more interference. British officials did not see a contradiction in claiming an independent status for Afghanistan and pressing the amir for a British residency at his court. In this sense, the label 'independence' again shows that dividing British India's attitudes towards Afghanistan into coherent phases, such as 'masterly inactivity', was really a fiction enacted by the colonial state.

Salisbury argued for the creation of a residency system in Afghanistan that would secure influence over Kabul's government circles. In his correspondence with the government of India, he stressed the role a resident would be able to have in the decision-making process in Kabul, something that would be actively pursued in 1879

[146] Ibid., 126 (23-24).
[147] Ibid., 126 (21).
[148] Ibid.

with the Cavagnari mission. British residents elsewhere in the subcontinent during the time of the East India Company had played a key diplomatic role in princely states. Similarly, in Afghanistan Salisbury believed that a resident in Kabul would become a key player in securing British India's access to the amir and protection of British interests. The secretary of state justified this approach by arguing that the amir's refusal to allow a British mission into his territory was responsible for British India's ignorance of Afghan and Central Asian affairs. For Salisbury, this undermined its ability to counteract Russian advances in the region. In late 1875 he stressed that insufficient intelligence coming from Afghanistan made it impossible for the government of India to exercise 'any influence, in case of emergency, on the minds of the Amir or his nobles'.[149] He remarked that, without the assistance of a 'European mind' advising him in 'interpreting the events which have recently taken place in Central Asia', the amir was ultimately unable to form a 'more enlightened judgement'.[150] Salisbury was referring to the recent Russian incorporation of the *khanate* of Khiva as a protectorate in 1873 and its further advance towards Merv in 1874 and Kokhand in 1876.[151] He argued that a British resident in Afghanistan would keep the government of India informed about Russian movements and would perform the crucial task of giving 'advice' to the amir, in this way extending British hold over the whole area.[152]

In making his case for a British residency, Salisbury drew on ideas of British superiority in managing Indian states: the government of India, by virtue of its enlightened government, alone could secure a just rule and the protection of Afghanistan's territorial integrity. He argued that, with only the advice of a 'singularly prejudiced durbar' Shere Ali Khan was able to 'reason by his Asiatic experience'. British experience in India had however shown that 'Indian diplomatist, by superior intellect and force of character' had been able, 'in their intercourse with Native Princes' to '[triumph] over more stubborn prejudices'.[153] Salisbury noted:

> The serious peril to which [the amir's] independence is exposed, the inability of the British Government to secure the integrity of his dominions unless it can watch through the eyes of its own officers the course of events upon his frontier, will, if these topics are enforced in personal intercourse by an Agent

[149] Ibid., 125 (2).
[150] Ibid., 125 (14).
[151] Ibid., 134; Gulzad, *External Influences*.
[152] 'Nos. 125-126', 125 (9).
[153] Ibid., 125 (14).

> of competent ability, probably outweigh in the Amir's mind any rancour surviving from the events of thirty-five years ago, or any dissatisfaction with the issue of the Seistan arbitration.[154]

By arguing in favour of a stronger British presence in the territories of the amir of Kabul, Salisbury started to build the ground for what would become the dominant narrative of Anglo-Afghan relations during the Lytton administration. British influence in the country was justified to protect Afghanistan from Russia's territorial advance.

However, British agents in Afghanistan were not only to watch the frontiers of the country but also build a tangible British influence upon the amir. In Salisbury's argument, Anglo-Afghan relations were seen through the lenses of the Indian system of residencies, which had been used since the eighteenth century to extend more or less informal influence on native courts. For the secretary of state, a British resident in Kabul was to perform similar duties to his counterparts in India. Thus, Northbrook resisted Salisbury's policy proposal because he adhered to a different idea of Afghanistan's position within the empire. However, the policy theorised by Salisbury would be applied to Afghanistan from the mid-1870s onwards. In the long-term, it permanently changed the position of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* the British empire and created the space for the government of India to curtail its independence.

The shift from the Mayo policy to one of more intervention in Afghanistan's internal affairs was met with significant opposition and contestation from members of the government of India. The debates that this opposition unleashed showed the contradictions inherent in Salisbury and Lytton's arguments. Some members of the viceroy's council countered their policy of pushing for more pressure on the amir. They objected to the advisability of insisting on a British mission to Kabul, and some argued in favour of maintaining Mayo and Northbrook's policy course. A. Hobhouse, law member of the council, and Sir W. Muir, financial member, believed that the new approach would threaten the amir by intimating that future British cooperation was conditional on the amir's compliance with British envoys in his territory.[155] Henry Norman, the council's military member, argued that the letters Lytton sent to the amir were 'too long, too scolding, and too threatening'.[156] For Hobhouse they were 'a

[154] Ibid.
[155] 'Nos. 104-272, Peshawar Conference', May 1877, 1, 5, 7, Foreign Department, K.W. Secret, NAI.
[156] Ibid., 17.

departure from the principle hitherto approved [by the council]. For him the 'threats conveyed' were against the 'principle that no compulsion was to be put on the Amir' if he denied access to the mission and looked 'very like the first step in a war'.[157] He pointed out the legitimacy of the amir's reservations in accepting them:

> I cannot myself agree that the Amir's conduct is to be imputed to unfriendliness in any other sense than this; that he wants to be independent, and is afraid that the presence on an English envoy will, sooner or later, sap his independence, and reduce him to the condition of other Native States – a fear not wholly unwarranted by history.[158]

These dissenting voices in council were aware that the steps suggested by Lytton mimicked the process through which other native states had been stripped of their independence and encompassed under British paramountcy. As had been the case for the Indian native states referred to by Hobhouse, these polities' sovereignty had often been curtailed the moment in which a British envoy was installed at the court of the local ruler.[159]

As would become visible during the residency of Pierre Louis Cavagnari, who was sent to Kabul in the summer of 1879 after British India's annexation of parts of Afghanistan, the Lytton policy aimed for the progressive marginalization of the amir's authority within his own court. In India, the East India Company and the government of India had often demanded more participation in the political affairs of the native states through political alliances with local nobilities. In fact, Lytton sought direct contacts with brokers within the government of Kabul - 'partizans' and 'well-wishers' as he called them.[160] The opinions written by Hobhouse, Norman and Muir denounced the policy suggestions made by Lytton and his party of supporters in council as anticipating further demands to be dropped on the amir. These council members resisted the policy suggested by Lytton. As W. Muir pointed out:

> [The Amir] is now to be told that the refusal is an affront to the British nation; that the admission of such an embassy to his presence is the condition on which alone the friendly terms now subsisting will be continued; and that persistence in the refusal will compel the British Government to 're-adjust the relations existing between them, and to

[157] Ibid., 1, 5.
[158] Ibid., 1.
[159] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*.
[160] 'Mss Eur F132/21, Opening of Afghan War. Demi-Official Correspondence with Lord Lytton, Lord Cranbrook, Sir G.P. Colley, Sir Richard Temple and Sir Neville Bowles Chamberlain', July 1878, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.

> consider the interests of this country only, irrespective of those of His Highness and his dominions.[161]

The demand for a British mission in Kabul was seen as the stepping stone for a permanent residency and for the eventual 'free circulation of British officers in Afghanistan' or the 'concession […] of agents at one or more points in the Amir's territory, and, perhaps, for further missions at intervals to the Amir himself'.[162] In Hobhouse's opinion, this course would certainly 'embark [the government of India] on a coercive policy' in the long term.[163] Thus, these British administrators saw a connection between Lytton's attempt to introduce a resident in Afghanistan and the effect that similar measures had had on the independence and sovereignty of the native states in India. The dissenting voices in council suggested that, should this policy be pursued, Afghanistan would be cast into a position of subordination *vis-à-vis* British India and be made a *de facto* British 'feudatory'.[164]

While they opposed Lytton's policy, these members of the viceroy's council argued that a certain degree of control should be maintained over Afghanistan. Indeed, they were aware of and supported the limitations to Afghanistan's independence that had characterised Mayo and Northbrook's policy line. During the discussions in council, Muir disputed whether there was any 'necessity for a change in [the] existing policy' at all, arguing that British India's 'hold on Afghanistan is, to all intents and purposes, as firm as if it rested on a defensive treaty. Our exclusive right to hold political relations with the Amir is admitted by Russia, and the sentiments of Shere Ali have been repeatedly expressed to the same effect'.[165] Muir stressed that the increased requests for access suggested by Lytton were not, at that moment, counterbalanced by any additional concession made by the government of India to the amir. Muir and the other members stressed that the behaviour of the amir had not been disloyal or antagonistic, as Lytton believed. Hobhouse stated that for him the policy that had been pursued until that point was the correct way to go and Norman further remarked that it was 'in no way essential to us at present to send an envoy to Kabul, or to take immediate steps at all; while to have a breach with Kabul on such a matter

[161] 'Nos. 104-272', 7–11.
[162] Ibid., 1, 4, 7.
[163] Ibid., 1–2.
[164] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India'.
[165] 'Nos. 104-272', 9.

seems to me in the highest degree inexpedient'.[166] For him, pressuring the amir was unnecessary because Afghanistan was already dependent on the imperial power. Hobhouse argued that 'the Amir's necessities will, before very long, be sure to drive him to ask some favour of us, and then will be the time to make the reception of an envoy the price of assistance'.[167] For this group of council members the agreement that had been laid out in the Ambala conference of 1869 had already made Afghanistan dependent on British India. The financial subsidy and supply of military equipment, as well as Shere Ali's formal recognition as amir had bound the government of Afghanistan inextricably with its imperial neighbour. Thus, the debates in council sharply questioned Lytton's critique of the amir's alleged misbehaviour: they did not want Afghanistan to become a princely state but wanted to maintain it as formally independent albeit under British indirect influence.

These two lines of argument on British India's policy towards Afghanistan differed in their understanding of this native polity's 'independence'. None of the parties argued for a complete abstention from influencing Afghanistan's political landscape and allowing this polity complete freedom to design its regional policy. However, Mayo and Northbrook on the one side, and Lytton and Salisbury on the other, argued for different ways to achieve British India's control over Afghanistan. While for the former this could be done through indirect means, for the latter it required a permanent British presence, in the figure of a resident, at the Kabuli court. From the mid-1870s, Lytton and Salisbury succeeded in redirecting the government of India's policies towards the model of the Indian native states, trying to implement in Afghanistan comparable structures of control over its native ruler.

Challenging the Great Game narrative: the local dimension of British India's policy

The possibility of a Russian threat was a central point in the debates within the governments of India and London and a key element in the policy making on Afghanistan in these crucial years. However, the narrative of Russian territorial advances being perceived as a threat to British India's security should be read against the government debate of the late 1870s. As Yapp and Gulzad have argued with reference to the first Anglo-Afghan war (1838-42), the representatives of the government of India pointed to both internal and external menaces forging British

[166] Ibid., 2, 6.
[167] Ibid., 2.

Indian policy.[168] In fact, a few decades later both Lytton and Cranbrook argued that Russia's expansion was an integral part of the government's policy in Afghanistan, but it was far from dominant. In these years the debates of the government of India entailed different and contradictory arguments. On the one side, Russia figured prominently in the government debate and informed part of the decisions taken by the government of India towards a new Afghanistan policy. On the other, British officials in India and London acknowledged that there was no real possibility of Russia threatening British India's security. Therefore, the arguments about Russia's territorial expansion being a threat for British India were far from dominant and should be balanced against other policy considerations the government of India made about its Afghanistan policy.

Between 1875 and 1878, Russia assumed an increasingly central place in the government of India's debates. In the arguments made in 1878 by Cranbrook, Russia's advances towards Khiva and Kokhand demanded for a reconsideration of British policy towards an increased British presence in Afghanistan. Cranbrook considered keeping Afghanistan as an ally 'a matter of grave importance', which had however 'to be considered with reference to the rapid march of events in Turkestan'.[169] He argued that 'the rapid development of events in Central Asia was gradually increasing the difficulty of abstaining from closer relations with the ruler of Kabul'.[170] In his view, it was the advance of Russia towards Afghanistan that pushed for closer relations with Kabul, and the initial pressures the government of India had exercised back in 1875 for the reception of a British mission in Kabul had at the time already been justified by the advances in Central Asia. Northbrook also argued that the main reason for prompting a new course of policy was the expansionist policy of Russia. For him 'the question has been clothed with an importance it never possessed before by the recent advances of Russia, which have placed her outermost posts in some places almost on the frontier of Afghanistan, in others upon roads which lead to it by easy and well supplied roads'.[171]

Similarly, for Salisbury the main concern with Russia's advance was that the 'proximity of Russia to Afghanistan [had become] closer and more established',

[168] Yapp, *Strategies of British India*; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 51.
[169] 'Nos. 910-911', 911(10).
[170] Ibid., 911(8).
[171] 'Nos. 125-126', 125 (4).

leading to the 'establishment of a dominant Russian influence in Afghanistan'.[172] The 'danger' of this presence, as he defined it, revolved around Russia's interference in the internal politics of Afghanistan or drawing the amir into a 'collision with [its] frontier forces' as a 'pretext for the exaction of some territorial penalty'. Russia could also, 'by terror or corruption, obtain a mastery over the Amir which will detach him from English interests, and leave to her choice the moment for penetrating to any portion of the country.[173] Otherwise, Salisbury thought that, 'if [Russia] fails to shake [the amir's] loyalty, his hold on power may be destroyed by internal disorder, and Russia, by establishing her influence over the chiefs who may become dominant may secure the same advantages as would have resulted from the adhesion of the Amir himself'.[174] For Salisbury the presence of a British resident was crucial to prevent Russian movements inside Afghanistan or at least keep the government of India informed about them. These arguments stressed the importance of the geopolitical dimension of British India's Afghanistan policy. The expansion of Russia demanded an increased British presence in Afghanistan, since, these figures thought, Russia might undermine the relationship the government of India had been establishing with this native polity.

Debates within the government of India also showed that often British officials completely disregarded the geopolitical dimension of Russia's advance. While placing Russia's territorial expansion within the debate, Lytton and Salisbury argued that Russia did not represent a force strong enough to extend its territories towards British possessions in the subcontinent. Cranbrook argued for stationing British agents in Afghanistan in order to check on Russian advances, while acknowledging that 'no immediate danger appeared to threaten British interests on the frontier of Afghanistan'.[175] Northbrook pointed out that Russia's advances did not represent a threat to British India's security. He noted that 'at present we are in possession of no information which leads us to look upon Russian interference in Afghanistan as a probable or near contingency, or to anticipate that the Russian Government will deviate from the policy of non-extension so recently declared'.[176] While acknowledging that the 'dangers to the independence of Afghanistan' could

[172] Ibid., 125 (5, 9).
[173] Ibid., 125 (5).
[174] Ibid.
[175] 'Nos. 910-911', 911(10).
[176] 'Nos. 125-126', 126 (20).

emanate from 'the future action of the Russian Government or of Russian officers' as well as 'from the actions of the Amir and the Sirdars or people of Afghanistan', there was no evidence to uphold the first position.[177]

Northbrook was satisfied that Russia perfectly understood that 'Great Britain could not look with indifference on any measures tending to impair or interfere with that independence'.[178] He opposed the stationing of British agents in Afghanistan. In fact, he argued that the advantage of stationing an agent in Herat was 'contingent upon a condition of things which did not exist'. For him, the lack of any imminent threat meant the government could not justify an Afghan residency.[179] At the same time, he stressed that, with the possibility of external threats ruled out, the 'amir was counselled to devote his undisturbed attention to the consolidation and improvement of his internal Government'.[180] In 1869, Mayo had pressured the amir towards pursuing the internal stability of his dominions and extending his government's territorial limits. Northbrook still shared this approach and clearly pointed out that Afghan affairs should be guided by British India's attention to the internal settlement of the country rather than distressing about non-existent external threats. Protecting the independence of the amir from foreign dangers started to be used as the main argument for asking for closer Anglo-Afghan relations. Lytton would make the same argument a few months down the road, when the crisis of Anglo-Afghan relations was fully underway. However, at a closer look it was not so much the fear of a Russian invasion of Afghanistan or even of India that triggered Salisbury and Lytton's arguments for the containment of Russia. Rather, it was Russia's potential for interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan that made them uneasy. As such, despite the argument gaining increasing resonance on the eve of the Afghan war of 1878-81, the acknowledgement of the immateriality of Russian encroachments made this claim largely a fiction and a hollow instrument of propaganda in London as well as in India. Thus, while the immediacy of any Russian danger was still very much in doubt, the new viceroy brought Russia and the imperial question in Central Asia at the centre of the debate and used it to justify much of his policy decisions on Afghanistan, also in his dealings with the amir himself.

[177] Ibid., 126 (17).
[178] Ibid., 126 (19).
[179] Ibid., 126 (5).
[180] Ibid., 126 (20).

These often contradictory considerations revealed the multifaceted dimension of the government of India's policy. For Lytton, Russian expansion in Central Asia and the security of British India's northern border were part of a wider regional strategy that was local rather than imperial. The policy advocated by the viceroy entangled the Afghan question, Russian expansionism and British India's extension of paramountcy in a closely knit web. His considerations underlined British India's understanding of Afghanistan's place *vis-à-vis* the empire, rather than Anglo-Russian imperial antagonism. For Lytton, the question of British influence in Afghanistan could not be disassociated from the general question of British India's frontier security. In August 1878 he pointed out that:

> In its present stage, the question is an Afghan, rather than a Russian, a local, rather than an imperial, one. We cannot deal with the Ameer through Russia, but we can most effectively deal with Russia through the Ameer, by preventing him from dealing with her […] I shall hope to see, as the only practical result of their unwarrantable intrusion at Cabul, the early establishment of a recognised British resident officer at Herat.[181]

Lytton recognised that the situation the government of India had to deal with was triggered by Russian advances in Central Asia, however the actions these considerations led to were local and bore local consequences. The broader geopolitical considerations made by the government of Kabul partially informed political decisions that directly impinged upon Afghanistan and often had a direct stake in its internal developments. At the same time, the government's decisions were informed by the idea that under Shere Ali Afghanistan was becoming increasingly stable and militarily efficient, something which in itself the government of India considered a threat for British India's security, as will be seen in the next section. Thus, the policy debates of the late 1870s highlighted the regional dimension of British policies and should force us to disengage from the Great Game narrative that has long highlighted the primacy of the international dimension and grand imperial strategy. At the same time, these considerations deeply questioned Afghanistan's status within the British empire and the extent to which British India was able to expand its influence over this polity.

For the government of India, the extension of influence over Afghanistan was closely linked with the location of British India's imperial frontier. Historians

[181] 'Mss Eur F132/21', 132.

have framed this issue in terms of British India's frontier security, which became a source of anxiety for the government of India. Singhal has remarked that Lytton's policy towards Afghanistan, as expressed at the 1877 conference of Peshawar, was informed by the 'desire to maintain a strong frontier' between British India and Afghanistan.[182] On that occasion British and Afghan representatives met at Peshawar to discuss Lytton's persistent request to station agents in Afghanistan territory. Shere Ali's minister and envoy, Syud Nur Muhammad Shah, re-stated to Sir Lewis Pelly and Henry Bellew, the British representative and his secretary, the main requests that the amir had made at the 1869 Ambala meeting and which the amir felt were being disregarded, especially since the British occupation of Quetta in November 1876. Nur Muhammad Shah reminded them of British promises of non-interference, support in case of foreign aggression and the recognition of the amir's heir Abdullah Jan.[183] However, in these years the governments of India and London were more preoccupied with what would become Afghanistan's north-western border to Russia in 1887. For Lytton, British India's immediate frontier was less important than Afghanistan's outer frontier towards Central Asia. For him, as for a generation of British administrators after him, pushing British India's frontier northwards went hand in hand with extending indirect influence over Afghanistan.

In August 1878 Lytton wrote to Cranbrook, the secretary of state, that 'the more northern boundary of our political influence, and indirect command, is a question which also calls for immediate decision'.[184] When discussing British India's preoccupation with borders in the north-west, Lytton rarely referred to what would become the Durand line as the border in question. On the contrary, for him the border that should become British India's 'suitable northern frontier' was represented by the northernmost reaches of Afghan political influence. Lytton pointed out that he:

> had advocated the continuation of the Hindu Kush, and its spurs, to Herat, as our main line, with outposts at Balk, Maimena, and Herat, and the Oxus as our visible boundary; in accordance with the understanding arrived at between the British and Russian governments. But I am led to believe that the people of Badakshan are much less united with Afghanistan, and much more closely connected with the Usbegs of Bokhara.[185]

[182] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 20.
[183] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 91; Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 20.
[184] 'Mss Eur F132/21', 132.
[185] Ibid.

Lytton remarked that his initial plan of bringing 'the provinces on the left bank of the Oxus', under Afghan suzerainty, 'under [British] influence' was now doubtful due to 'Russia's rapid progress'.[186] Therefore, he argued, it seemed necessary to abandon 'all pretensions to influence, or self-assertion, along the line of the Oxus' and leave Badakhshan and Balk to fall under 'Russian dominion'.[187] Lytton thus advocated the drawing of British India's imperial boundary line north of the Hindu Kush, which would make the British empire *de facto* conterminous to Russian-controlled Central Asia. In this light, the government of India's attempts at extending its influence over the frontier polities and Afghanistan became a way to expand the frontier of the empire in this region.

The border Lytton envisioned was not a line of British direct control, although this possibility was never excluded in the long term. The viceroy argued for the creation of a line of influence, which was to be achieved through the stationing of British officials in key locations, such as Herat. In his argument, the distinction between indirect influence and direct control were often quite tenuous:

> But if we undertake the permanent protection of Herat, I feel no doubt whatever that, at sometime or other, and in some form or other, we shall eventually be obliged to absorb the whole of the mountain country between Herat and Cabul. And by fixing at Herat the ultimate point of our resistance, instead of withdrawing and confining all such points to the line formed by the Hindu Kush and the Helmund, we shall have virtually doubled the distance between our outer line of defence, and our true base, which must probably always remain on the Indus.[188]

Lytton's argument describes a long-term strategy that considered pushing the border of British India, not Afghanistan, northwards in order to counteract Russian expansion southwards. The territories attached to the government of Kabul were thought of as part of British India's zone of influence, over which the government of India attempted to extend direct control during the second Afghan war.

In the late 1870s Afghanistan was not considered a 'buffer state' protecting British India from Russian encroachments, but it had become an integral part of the empire. As Alexander Arbuthnot, writing in the summer of 1876, put it:

> We have been content to remain passive, and to a great extent ignorant, spectators of the course of events, precluded from taking the most reasonable

[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., 32.
[188] Ibid., 132.

> precautions for ascertaining the actual state of affairs in a country which we regard, and which on all hands is admitted to be, the outpost of our empire.[189]

The idea of Afghanistan as an 'outpost' of the British empire informed Anglo-Afghan relations until the end of the century. As chapter four will show, in the mid-1890s the demarcation of the Durand line redefined the question of the reach of the government of India's paramountcy. In 1894, when the Durand line was drawn, administrators of the government of India argued that this border was an internal line that did not demarcate the reach of the British Indian empire. Thus, throughout these decades, there was a clear tension between extending the frontier of British influence and the location of its political frontier. These two never really overlapped but the former was always intended as a bridgehead for the potential extension of the latter.

To define the nature of British India's borders and hence of Afghanistan's status in the British empire, Lytton drew on examples in other parts of the empire, for example the Middle East. He compared the situation of Afghanistan to that of Cyprus and argued for the establishment of a similar form of 'protectorate'. Lytton advocated the drawing of British India's 'Central Asian line' at Herat, for which the British should guarantee 'the defence of Afghanistan up to that point' and establish 'there, as [was] established at Cyprus, a visible symbol of the sincerity and seriousness of that guarantee'.[190] For him:

> The only difference [was] that in Afghanistan we should not require for that purpose any *territorial* possession. Recognising British agents at certain points, or even only at Herat, are all that seem really requisite. We could not, of course, establish the symbol of British protectorate at Herat without the assent of the Ruler of Afghanistan, any more than it was possible to establish it at Cyprus without the assent of the Sultan.[191]

The strategy to be applied to Afghanistan was thus informed by experiences elsewhere in the empire. However, contrary to the Cyprian example, in Afghanistan actual territorial annexation was not indispensable for identifying British imperial frontiers. In fact, the frontier line advocated by Lytton was not a physical line of permanent British presence but, in his own assertion, a line delimiting British 'political influence and indirect command'.[192] He advocated the establishment of indirect forms of influence over the region through the stationing of British agents,

[189] 'Nos. 104-272', 12.
[190] 'Mss Eur F132/21', 132.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

who would also guarantee the security of the amir's dominions from Russian encroachments.

At first glance it was thus the international situation of Russian advances in Central Asia that triggered a change in the government of India's relations to Afghanistan. However, what British officials in India feared was not a Russian invasion of Afghanistan or India, nor that its presence on the border could cause instability in the subcontinent, as Malcolm Yapp has argued for the earlier part of the century.[193] The feared outcome was really the possibility of Russia supplanting British influence on the government of Kabul and gaining increased influence in the whole area. Therefore, the government of India's search for a firmer presence in Afghanistan may have to do with countering Russian influence in the area, how this was translated into practice had profound implications on the local political landscape. The incorporation of Afghanistan into the empire was accomplished through how it came to be seen within the system of native states. In the period between 1875 and 1878 the government of Kabul was increasingly understood as a native polity defying British India's paramount power and resisting its position as subsidiary native polity rather than an independent polity. The resistance on the part of the amir to receive any British representative in its domains served as the basis on which a narrative of Afghan defiance, rebellion and disorder was woven in the final months of 1878.

The reluctant princely state: engineering Afghanistan's place in the British empire through the extension of indirect influence

Between 1876 and 1878, the Lytton policy succeeded in transforming Afghanistan from semi-independent polity, as it had been in the wake of the Ambala conference, to subordinate native state.[194] He aimed at establishing a system of checks on the amir's rule through the figure of a British resident. Between 1876 and 1878, the viceroy repeatedly pressed the request of a British mission into Afghanistan on the amir, who steadily refused to comply. This unleashed a growing crisis in Anglo-Afghan relations that culminated in November 1878 with the second Afghan war.

The debates in the executive council gave expression to the different conceptualizations of Afghanistan's position *vis-à-vis* British India that continued to exist within the Government of India well into Lytton's viceroyalty. Some members

[193] Yapp, *Strategies of British India*.
[194] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 14.

of the viceroy's council were in favour of Lytton's policy, and supported his demands for a firmer British hold on the polity. In their arguments, they expressed the substance of this policy line. Administrators, such as Alexander Arbuthnot, member of the viceroy's council, called for a tougher stance towards the amir, arguing that the 'waiting policy' pursued by Northbrook and Mayo had been 'unsatisfactory' and had 'essentially failed'.[195] He questioned the validity of the line pursued so far by the government of India and its understanding of friendly relations between the two polities. This policy, Arbuthnot argued, was 'characterised by undue caution and reticence'.[196] In his opinion, 'the present situation, if not actually fraught with dangers, is so far from being desirable, or in any way suitable, to the position of responsibility which we occupy in relation to Afghanistan that it ought not to be allowed to continue'.[197] Arbuthnot and other members of council, such as Colonel Sir A. Clarke, head of the public works department, recognised the ambiguity of British India's former position *vis-à-vis* Afghanistan. As he put it:

> While, on the one hand, we are practically responsible for the maintenance of the independence of Afghanistan, on the other hand, we are debarred from adopting the only effectual means for obtaining information which *may* be of vital importance to us in the discharge of that responsibility.[198]

These debates highlight that for the supporters of the Lytton policy the fiction of Afghan 'independence' was no longer a satisfactory option. They lamented that, while since 1869 the government of India had positioned itself as the responsible authority of Afghanistan's independence and integrity, this did not come with adequate access to its territory and political landscape.[199] For them, Mayo and Northbrook had failed at extending British imperial paramountcy and gaining direct access, institutional or territorial.

Some members pointed out that in other parts of the empire the exercise of paramountcy had brought about the close relations they were expecting Afghanistan to agree to but which the amir was steadily trying to resist. They placed Afghanistan within the wider imperial framework of native polities in which the polities' formal independence co-existed with varying degrees of British influence and access. For them, there was no contradiction in asking the amir greater access to his domains. In

[195] 'Nos. 104-272', 11.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid., 12.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.

the words of E.C. Bayley, temporary member of the viceroy's council, the native British agent in Kabul should be instructed to convey to the amir that:

> While the British Government entertains every desire and wish to maintain the same attitude of friendship towards His Highness and his Government; that events have occurred and are likely to occur which will render it impossible for that Government to do so unless His Highness will consent to enter in free communications, and more intimate relations with the British [Indian] Government than have heretofore existed; and that while the Great British [Indian] Government has still the most cordial desire to maintain by marks of friendship and by the continuance of its support the dignity, independence, and security of His Highness's throne and dynasty, yet that His Highness by refusing to reciprocate the proffered confidence of the Queen's representative in India will place it out of the power of the British Government to ensure these objects.[200]

The Lytton administration increasingly made the maintenance of 'friendly relations' with the government of Kabul conditional on the latter's acceptance of closer ties. These ties were defined by the government of Kabul in terms of greater British access through a political mission and the presence of British agents in the amir's territories. Arbuthnot pointed out that at that point in time the government of India was barred from sending 'a British officer to Herat to watch the progress of events on that important frontier' and was also unable to 'depute a British Envoy to Kabul or Jalalabad to ascertain what the real sentiments of the Amir [were], or to inspire him with confidence in our alliance'.[201] Thus, the government of India's requests to the amir were linked both to securing his place in the system of indirectly ruled Indian polities and to guarding the frontiers of Afghanistan from Russian interference. As chapters three and four will show, by the concluding decades of the nineteenth century the government of India had fully conceptualised Afghanistan's northern frontier, in Maimena and on the Oxus, as the empire's outer frontiers. In 1877 such an understanding was already on the way and it implied a position for Afghanistan that could not be reduced to that of an independent state on British India's borders, but was more in line with a 'protectorate', a term that would be used to define its status in 1894.

Lytton's continued pressures for the establishment of a residency system in Afghanistan were part of a wider policy along British India's north-western border. Lytton envisaged a full-fledged plan for the reorganization of British India's north-

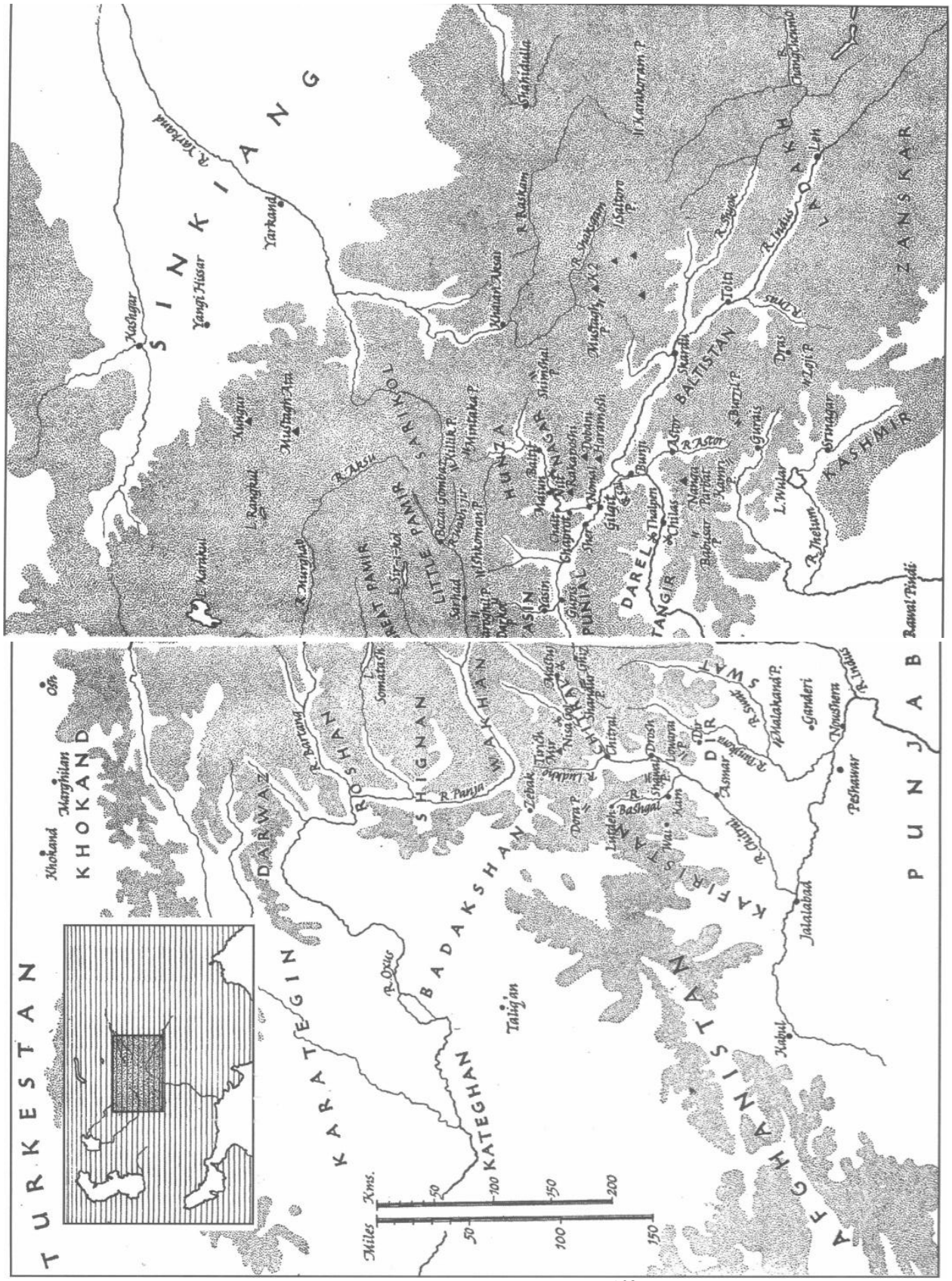
[200] Ibid., 3.
[201] 'Nos. 104-272'.

western frontier, which did not exclude a change of regime in Kabul.[202] From 1876 Lytton had been extending British India's influence into the polities of Kashmir, Dir, Chitral and Hunza and Baluchistan, positioned between British and Afghan territories.[203] As Alder has pointed out, in these years the government of India was not only active in the tribal areas but was building suzerain relations with the polities of the north-west frontier. The viceroy authorised political and military expeditions in the area, which resulted in the appointment of British political officers at the native courts.[204] However, what Gulzad rightly identifies as 'a competition' between the governments of India and Kabul 'over the frontier regions' was really aimed at curtailing Afghan influence in the area.[205] In 1878, the government of India perceived Shere Ali's political links with the frontier polities as unauthorised expansion. In fact, many of the territories in which the government of India was establishing its presence were claimed by the government of Kabul as Afghan territory by virtue of its pre-existing political relations with them. Lytton notably lamented that the amir had been:

> Interfering in territories not his own (e.g. Swat, Dhir, Bijour, Chitral, &c.) and this, regardless of the distinct prohibition addressed to or by the Punjab Government in Lord Northbrook's time, and my own; and he has been interfering with tribes not his, tribes in our pay, on our own border, whom he has endeavoured to incite to participate in a *jehad* against us.[206]

Lytton's policy was part of a veritable policy of expansion that aimed at territorial acquisitions through the use of indirect forms of rule and influence. This policy was thus aimed not only at the 'fringe' polities on the border, but actively targeted Afghanistan.[207] This process of Anglo-Afghan competition along the frontier

[202] 'IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO33/10, Rough Notes [Reviewing Khelat Affairs and Policy]-Lord Lytton', 1 July 1876, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.
[203] Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*, 100–114.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 67–68.
[206] 'Mss Eur F132/21', 132.
[207] Agha and Kolsky, *Fringes of Empire*.



Map of the western Himalayas and Pamirs[208]

[208] Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, fig. Map 8.

continued in the following decades, when British India continued to push its frontier deeper into Afghan territory. This triggered a silent scramble for land that eventually led to the demarcation of the Durand line.

Khelat was a case in point in British India's process of territorial expansion.[209] This polity became a terrain of experimentation for the government of India's policies of indirect rule: the governance strategies implemented in this polity influenced the approach that would be applied in the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar during the second Afghan war. In 1876 the government of India sent Major Robert Sandeman, who became agent to the governor-general of Baluchistan, on a mission to the *khan* of Khelat with the objective to pacify the area that had been in a state of political unrest for many years.[210] Summing up the government's policy towards the *khanate,* Lytton explicated the terms of Khelat's subordination *vis-à-vis* British India. He argued that a subsidy given by the government of India to the local ruler automatically debarred the latter from 'rejecting [British] advice'.[211] At the same time, he made it plain that only British support to *mir* Khodadad Khan, the *khan* of Khelat had allowed him to establish a strong rule and maintain his authority in the country.[212] Before British intervention, the situation had been that of a stalemate between the ruler and his local nobility. A similar logic was applied to the neighbouring states, where financial support always went hand in hand with the creation of residencies and agencies. In the case of Afghanistan, during the Ambala conference British officials had claimed to have supported and legitimised the amir, who had been recognised as the legitimate ruler of Afghanistan after four years of civil war.

The refusal of Shere Ali Khan to allow access to a British mission to Afghan territory nurtured the government of India's perception that Afghanistan was slipping away from British control. In India, Lytton was one of the main architects of a new institutionalised and hierarchical system that encompassed the native polities of the subcontinent: India's princely states were made into what Bernard Cohn has called a 'feudal order'.[213] The viceroy viewed Afghanistan and the polities along India's

[209] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*; Swidler, *Remotely Colonial*.
[210] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*.
[211] 'IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO33/10', 117.
[212] Ibid., 127.
[213] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India'.

north-western border as part of the same feudatory system of Indian states.[214] This became particularly visible on occasion of the 1877 Imperial Assemblage in Delhi.[215] The historical literature does not account for the fact that this occasion did not only unite all the native 'feudatories' of the British crown, but also a number of polities only indirectly connected to British India, such as Khelat, Kashmir, Gilgit. The amir of Afghanistan, Shere Ali Khan, had been invited by the viceroy but refused to join, a stance that had a noted relevance in the political climate of the 1870s.[216] In 1878 the secretary of state, Lord Cranbrook, further argued that the 'question' of the relations between British India and Afghanistan had 'assumed special prominence since the period of the transfer to the crown of the direct administration of India'.[217] He stated that:

> The growing interest in the subject has been the result partly of the increased responsibilities assumed by the Government of Her Majesty in maintaining Her Indian Empire, and partly of the intestine disorders to which Afghanistan became a prey after the accession of the present Amir to the throne in the year 1863.[218]

Cranbrook thus saw a relationship between the establishment of crown rule in 1858 and the drawing of closer Anglo-Afghan relations. For Lytton and Cranbrook Afghanistan became an integral part of the changes the British empire in India had been undergoing since 1858 and of the revamped system of native states designed in those years.

Cranbrook stressed two points that became the main underlying justifications for pushing towards increased British presence in the Afghan polity. First, British India's growing engagement with Afghanistan was the result of its 'increased responsibilities' in the maintenance of the empire in India. The government of India justified its pressure on the amir for greater access to his territories by their understanding of British India as the legitimising paramount power and guarantor of the amir's rule. In its post-mutiny relations with the native states, the government of

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[214] Ibid.
[215] James T. Wheeler, *The History of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi, Held on the 1st January, 1877, to Celebrate the Assumption of the Title of Empress of India by Her Majesty the Queen: Including Historical Sketches of India and Her Princes Past and Present* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1877).
[216] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*; H.W. Bellew, *Afghanistan and the Afghans: Being a Brief Review of the History of the Country, and Account of Its People, with a Preface to the Present Crisis and War with the Amir Sher Ali Khan* (London: Sampspn Low; Marston & Company, 1879).
[217] 'Nos. 910-911', 911(4).
[218] Ibid.

India increasingly fashioned itself as the moral authority not only for the princely states of India, but also for the polities on the 'fringe' of empire. These self-professed responsibilities of the government of India were closely tied to the changes in its relations with the native rulers, something that Afghanistan was very much part of. In the secretary of state's view, the growing role of the government of India triggered its 'growing interest' in Afghan affairs. As will be seen below, the progressive appropriation of Afghanistan within the remit of British paramountcy in the region also allowed for increased interference in its affairs. British paramountcy meant that Afghanistan was considered as part of the empire and subject to British moral and political directions, which recalled the similar arguments used by the Bombay government during the Baroda case in the mid-1870s.[219]

In the autumn of 1878 the government of India decided to press a British presence in Afghanistan on the amir. In 1878 a mission, which included a military escort, was planned from Peshawar under Sir Neville Chamberlain, at that time commander of the Madras army and military member of council, with the objective to counterbalance the Russian mission that had visited Kabul from May to July 1878. Lytton requested the amir that British agents be stationed at Kabul and Herat and that they control Afghanistan's foreign relations.[220] The Chamberlain delegation had been preceded by an advance party headed by Sir Louis Cavagnari, who would become the British resident in Kabul in the summer of 1879. Cavagnari was formally refused access to Afghan territory at Ali Masjid, near the Khyber Pass, and, as a consequence, the Chamberlain mission was not dispatched. Following these events, an ultimatum was sent to Shere Ali Khan by the viceroy demanding access for a British representative. At the expiry of the ultimatum on 20 November 1878, war was declared against Afghanistan.[221] As will be seen in chapter two, these military operations led to the annexation of significant Afghan frontier territory – the polities of Pishin, Sibi, Kurram and Khost were first occupied and then formally annexed by treaty to British India in May 1879 – and the occupation of Kandahar in the following year.[222]

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[219] Copland, 'The Baroda Crisis of 1873–77: A Study in Governmental Rivalry'.
[220] Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 35.
[221] *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80. Abridged Official Account*, 2.
[222] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 39; Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 94; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 93; Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*, 40.

Between 1877 and 1878 relations between the governments of Kabul and India progressively deteriorated. In these months, the government of India continued to insist on the amir accepting closer ties. The viceroy and the secretary of state recast the amir's position as openly challenging the relationship of 'friendship' binding Afghanistan to British India. In November 1878, the secretary of state Lord Cranbrook pointed out that 'the language and conduct of Shere Ali, which had so long been dubious, [had become] openly inimical'.[223] In fact, after the Peshawar conference in 1877, Cranbrook argued, the government of India was 'no longer left in doubt as to the reality of the Amir's alienation, which had previously been a matter of speculation'.[224] Notably the increasing closeness between the government of Kabul and the Russian authorities in Turkestan and the reception by the amir of a Russian embassy in Kabul in May 1878 led Lytton to argue that 'a policy of inaction could no longer be persisted in'.[225] For the viceroy, the amir had at that point 'no further excuse for declining to receive at his capital an Envoy from the British Government'.[226] The behaviour of the amir in this instance was viewed by Cranbrook as an openly inimical action against what he claimed to be favourable conditions posed by the government of India to strengthening Anglo-Afghan ties. Thus, when Lytton started to press on the amir a British mission to Kabul, the amir resisted it on the ground that he 'wished to continue Anglo-Afghan relations as defined in the Ambala and Simla conferences'.[227]

The amir strenuously resisted British pressure to refashion Anglo-Afghan relations along the lines envisioned by Lytton. He was aware of the implications a British resident entailed for his political autonomy, as pointed out above. In fact, from the amir's point of view, the mission of Sir Lewis Pelly was seen as 'the forerunner of a more permanent' presence, and Hobhouse, the viceroy's council member, remarked that he was 'justified' in looking at British requests that way.[228] Shere Ali contested the different ways the government of India had become a third party player in Afghan politics since 1869. In the 1870s the government of India had sought to establish direct access to Kabuli and Kandahari elites. Lytton's frontier policy had further

[223] 'Nos. 910-911', 911(16).
[224] Ibid., 911(17).
[225] Ibid., 911(19).
[226] Ibid.
[227] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 335.
[228] 'Nos. 104-272', 1–2.

developed political relations with some of the government of Kabul's dependent suzerain polities, a strategy that would become central to British India's administration of northern Afghanistan during the second Afghan war. Now, Shere Ali felt that British interference was bypassing his authority and impinging upon Afghanistan's political relations. He protested against the different strands of the government of India's interference: the viceroy had intervened in favour of Shere Ali's son Yakub Khan, when he had rebelled against his father in 1871 and 1874, as well as against 'the gifts sent by [Lord Northbrook] direct to the Chief of Wakhan, who is a tributary of the Amir'.[229] At the same time, the amir requested the government of India for closer relations, but without the added burden of a British resident at his court. He had repeatedly asked the government of India for an 'alliance and a formal recognition of the order of succession as established by him in the person of his son, Abdulla Jan'.[230] However, the government of India, on its part, was available to give in to his requests and 'help him with money, arms and troops, if necessary, to repel unprovoked invasion', 'if he unreservedly accepted and acted on our advice in all external relations'.[231] Thus, the government of India's increasing requests of greater access to Afghan territory had triggered the second Afghan war and also led to the progressive alienation of the Amir.

Lytton and Cranbrook's engineering of Afghanistan as a subordinate native polity relied on an understanding of its internal situation as inherently unstable. They presented Shere Ali as openly antagonising the government of India and as a corrupt administrator. The argument on the amir's misadministration was a powerful part of the case made in 1878 by Lytton in favour of military intervention. The administration of Shere Ali Khan and of his son Yakub Khan, who ascended the throne after his father's flight to Turkestan in December 1878, was portrayed as weak, ineffective and despotic. Lytton highlighted the amir's heavy system of taxation and his compulsory military service in the large standing army.[232] He stressed that since October 1877 the Amir had levied increasing amounts of taxes over the urban and rural populations and had imposed compulsory military service.[233] Hasan Kakar also mentions that during his reign Shere Ali had pushed forward the consolidation and reunification of the

[229] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 21.
[230] 'Nos. 910-911', sec. 911(14).
[231] 'Nos. 104-272', 12–13.
[232] Kātib Hazārah, *The History of Afghanistan*.
[233] Ibid.

Afghan state initiated by Dost Muhammad Khan, which culminated in the institution of 'a large modern army, the establishment of the state-controlled civil and military schools, of a consultative assembly, the expansion of the existing bureaucracy, and the rationalisation of the system of taxation'.[234] These measures were seen by many British Indian officials as a potential cause of widespread unrest in Afghanistan. As the British informant in Kabul reported: 'The poll-tax and forced service are extremely dangerous measures; the city people have been taxed, but the rural population throughout Afghanistan has, without exception, revolted against the imposition'.[235] There was further mention of the Amir's plans to introduce 'an income and trade tax of 10 per cent', which the government of India viewed with considerable concern.[236] It notably feared that burdensome taxation could lead to widespread revolt and possibly represent a threat to the stability of Shere Ali's rule and his hold over the country.

The government of India's reports described Afghanistan's internal situation as on the bring of institutional collapse and widespread popular revolt against the amir. They described the political climate in Kabul, Kandahar and Herat as characterised by increasing instability. In these cities, the government of India argued, the amir was employing the military to prevent large movements of people fleeing from attempts of increased taxation in the countryside. A Confidential Report of October 1877 reported that:

> from Farrah [the amir] had realized Rupees 36,000 on account of the poll-tax. Ninety-two families of the Tamiri tribe had already emigrated to Ghain and Brijand, and he feared that the further imposition of the tax would result in still greater emigration. The Amir replied that the tax was to be recovered at all costs, and a military cordon was to be established to prevent the people from leaving. Orders have been sent to Herat to impose the poll-tax with the help of the troops if necessary, and to prevent the people of Ghorian and Kosan from emigrating to Meshed.[237]

The government of India portrayed the tension between the amir and the population as an indicator for potential generalised unrest. Shere Ali's rule was seen to be in jeopardy and was starting to assume the connotation of a 'reign of terror', in which 'chiefs, troops, and subjects, one and all, are disloyal, eagerly looking forwards for an

[234] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, xx.
[235] 'Nos. 124-125, Kabul News for October 1877', July 1878, Foreign Department, Secret, NAI.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., 2.

opportunity to offer their services to a rival'.[238] Thus, Afghanistan was seen as an increasingly unstable polity on the outskirts of the empire. The government of India concocted the political situation in Kabul into a narrative of Afghanistan presenting a threat for British India and creating a potential space for the extension of Russian influence over it. Afghanistan's internal unrest, similarly to the narrative that had been created around the state of Awadh leading to its annexation in 1856, was presented as a justification for the country's potential territorial incorporation.

At the same time, the government of India also stressed the instability at the amir's court in Kabul. In the last months of 1877, rumours about the exacerbation of political factions in Kabul started to circulate and are reported by British news-writers in the city. In these reports it is stated that 'a plot was ripe for the assassination of the Amir Sher Ali Khan; the principal persons in the plot were his own officers'.[239] It was pointed out that:

> Danger from the members of [the amir's] own family must be ever present to the mind of His Highness, who can scarcely reckon with confidence upon immunity from it during his lifetime and must be well aware that it is certain to ensure upon his death.[240]

Additional reports reached Simla on the amir accumulating increasing resources, which were being used for equipping the growing number of men drawn into military service:

> The Amir has accumulated considerable wealth; a large proportion of his revenues have been steadily converted into gold and stored in his private treasury; the general treasury is, as a rule, empty. Greater attention is paid to the comforts and equipment of the troops than to anything else, and considerable sums are expended on the workshops and arsenal, in which machinery is worked both by steam and water-power.[241]

Shere Ali was not only defying the type of relations British India wanted to impose on him, but was seen as actively resisting British paramount power. Many British administrators argued that excessive taxation and a precarious internal political situation were creating an explosive situation in Afghanistan. For them, internal unrest was teamed with the increasing military strength the Afghan state had achieved

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[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.
[240] 'Nos. 202, Opinion of Her Majesty's Government on the Result Obtained by the Peshawar Conference. Future Policy of the British Government towards Afghanistan', November 1877, sec. 202(10), Foreign Department, Secret, NAI.
[241] 'Nos. 124-125', 2.

under Shere Ali's reforms. In the eyes of the government of India, Afghanistan started to be increasingly viewed as a potential threat to British India's stability along the same lines as Russia. As a result, Lytton's strategy centred on a plan to break up the 'Afghan kingdom' and '[putting] in place of the present Ruler a sovereign more friendly to our interests, and more dependent on our support'.[242] As with Khelat, annexation was never out of the realm of possibility and in fact Lytton stated that, in case of the failure of this approach, it would be necessary to 'conquer and hold so much of Afghan territory as will […] be absolutely requisite for the permanent maintenance of our north-west frontier'.[243] In the months to come, this policy would be put into practice during the invasion and occupation of Kabul and Kandahar. During the Afghan war, the government of India continually pondered annexation as a concrete possibility and balanced it against other forms of indirect rule. As chapter two will show, during the war different means were designed to achieve the definite incorporation of Afghanistan into the British Indian empire.

Conclusion

In the Autumn of 1878, during the first phase of the Afghan war, the government of India annexed the Afghan districts of Pishin, Sibi and Kurram and occupied Kandahar, as will be seen in more detail in the following chapter. In May 1879 the government of India and new amir Yakub Khan concluded the treaty of Gandamak. Yakub Khan, who had succeeded Shere Ali after his death, was made to agree to the permanent cession of the occupied districts.[244] The terms of the treaty finally gave the government of India the access it had been pushing for for the past years, while formalizing Afghanistan's status as a subordinate polity. The treaty stipulated that British agents should be stationed in Kabul and throughout the country; a telegraphic line between Kurram, under British occupation, and Kabul be constructed and strengthen the links to the subcontinent. At the same time, the government of Kabul was forced to surrender all rights over its foreign affairs to the government of India.[245] British India would also give an annual subsidy of 600,000

[242] 'Mss Eur F132/21', 132.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 43.
[245] C.U. Aitchison, ed., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and the Neighbouring Countries. Vol. XI Containing the Treaties, &c., Relating to the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Jammu and Kashmir, Eastern Turkistan and Afghanistan* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1909), 345–46.

Rupees to the government of Kabul.[246] As Reshtia has pointed out, with the signing of the Gandamak treaty Afghanistan 'was deprived for the first time of its traditional character of a "buffer state" and its Amir became virtually a feudatory of the British Crown'.[247] In fact, after the signing Lytton wrote to Cranbrook that 'this treaty gave the British paramount political position and influence in Afghanistan, which had at all times, both in India and England, been the avowed object of British policy, but which no British government had hitherto achieved'.[248] As argued above, the policies pursued by the government of India since at least 1869 had not reflected Afghanistan's status as a 'buffer state' but pointed to more complex interactions. Therefore, rather than a breaking point in Anglo-Afghan relations, the treaty of Gandamak should be seen as the culminating point of a long-term process of Afghanistan's subordination to the imperial power. In the same way, within an analysis of the long term interaction between Afghanistan and British India, the second Afghan war of 1878-81 should not be viewed as the culmination of Anglo-Russian tensions, but as a major political crisis of Anglo-Afghan relations.

Therefore, in the late 1870s Afghanistan was no longer seen as external to British India, as an independent polity on the borders of the empire, but was seen as very much part of it. This was because the indirect relations that had been worked out between the native states of India and Afghanistan were extended to the government of Kabul. The principle of paramountcy was employed to include Afghanistan within the borders of the empire as a polity to be controlled, legitimated and justified through its connections with the imperial power. The means worked out for the exercise of paramountcy were those of indirect control to be carried out through the stationing of a resident at the court of the local ruler. Therefore, while earlier scholarship has argued that British attempts to insert themselves into Afghanistan and develop their influence there were driven by the Russian threat, the development of Anglo-Afghan relations in these years show a different scenario. The government of India used Russian expansionism in Central Asia to make their case for further intervention in the Afghan polity. However, it was really the perceived internal instability in Afghanistan and the amir's defiance that were constructed as a threat to the stability in the broader region. In order to prevent a political crisis in Afghanistan, the

[246] Ibid., 347.
[247] Reshtia, *Between Two Giants*, 45.
[248] Ibid.

government of India devised an Afghanistan policy that mimicked those developed in the context of the Indian native states; the British governments in London and Calcutta increasingly viewed the government of Kabul and its suzerain territories as a native state. Afghanistan was increasingly drawn into the British Indian system of paramountcy, which the amir had challenged by its defying and uncooperative stance. As will be seen in the following chapter, the definite transformation of Afghanistan as a native polity under British paramountcy was attempted with the Cavagnari mission of June 1879, which established a British residency at the court of the amir. A few months later, when the resident was killed, this experiment ended. However, its failure led to the government of India to devise different strategies for extending imperial paramountcy over the Afghan polity. During the Afghan war, it led to experiments in both indirect and semi-direct rule in the country, which in turn would have lasting consequences for the set-up of the Afghan state in the period between 1881 and 1900.

Chapter two

Experiments in colony-building in Afghanistan: the practices of direct and indirect rule in Kabul and Kandahar

British expansionist ambitions towards Afghanistan from around 1875 eventually resulted in military intervention that started in November-December 1878. This followed the final refusal of the amir to allow access to a British mission, as pointed out in the previous chapter. This so-called first phase of the second Afghan war led to the annexation of tracts of country – Kurram, Khost, Pishin and Sibi – that had been under the suzerainty of the amir of Kabul. The annexation was stipulated in the treaty of Gandamak, imposed on Yakub Khan, Shere Ali Khan's son and new amir, in May 1879. The treaty permanently severed from Afghanistan these districts – excluding Khost, which was later returned to Afghanistan – and placed them under British administration, which took care of revenue collection, any surplus of which was to be transferred to the amir.[249] As argued in chapter one, the treaty sought to bring Afghanistan into a subordinate position similar to what had been achieved with the native states of India. This campaign followed months of negotiations between Shere Ali Khan and the government of India, first led by Northbrook and then by Lytton, and was intended to put pressure on the amir to finally allow a resident at his court. The government of India considered the treaty the conclusive step of the policy of increased pressure for British access into Afghanistan it had implemented since the mid-1870s. The treaty of Gandamak made provisions for a British official to assume the position of resident in Kabul and attempted to safeguard the position of those Afghan nobles that had cooperated with the British forces. The stationing of Pierre Louis Cavagnari, former deputy commissioner of Peshawar, in Kabul marked a key attempt to make Afghanistan into another Indian native polity under British paramountcy.

In September 1879, after around three months in Kabul, Cavagnari was murdered by the soldiers of a mutinous regiment of the Afghan army that was protesting over the failed payment of their salaries by the government of Kabul. His

[249] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 322.

death abruptly ended the residency experiment and, from the point of view of British India, signified the collapse of any influence the government had sought to gain over the amir's court through the residency. Re-establishing lost British paramountcy over Kabul triggered a further military campaign, which led to the occupation of the city and the establishment of a British-led government. In October 1879 Frederick Roberts, quartermaster-general of the Bengal army, reached Kabul at the head of the Kurram Valley Field Force and assumed the government of the city. At that point, the southern city of Kandahar had been occupied by the Indian Army and administered directly by the political officers of the government of India since January 1879. While historians of Afghanistan have portrayed British military operations towards Afghanistan as two separate campaigns, I suggest that the military operations were linked and had the ultimate goal of subordinating and fragmenting the Afghan polity, which had seen a period of territorial expansion and centralisation under amir Shere Ali Khan.[250] The second campaign, as analysed below, was meant to re-establish British access and influence over Afghanistan, lost with the death of the resident. Accordingly, in the Autumn of 1879 the government of India formulated a long-term governance project for Afghanistan that aimed at placing the area under permanent subordination to British India.

I argue that British state-building during the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar replicated many of the tensions colonialism was facing in India, which engaged ideas of sovereignty, native rule and representation, degrees of interference into local affairs, tradition and modern state institutions. Experiments in governance uneasily merged the annexationist trends of the earlier Company expansion in India – still alive in the 1870s as argued in chapter one – with the attempted establishment of embryonic forms of the institutions characteristic of formal colonialism in India: policing, land revenue, court trials, collection and systematization of knowledge, mapping.[251] The type of government British authorities established in Kabul and Kandahar used these 'modern' techniques of governance to create a rule that balanced direct and indirect forms and that consistently drew on native intermediaries for the executive function. At the same time, the British-led administration drew on what was

[250] Robson, *The Road to Kabul*; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*.
[251] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*; Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt*; Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859-1947*; Ludden, 'Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge'.

considered the Afghan traditional organisation of politics and society: ideas of genealogy, tribal governance, landed aristocracy were embedded in the formation of new administrations centred in the two cities, designed as proxy state-builders to expand beyond their respective provinces. British authorities envisioned the concrete political objective of making Afghanistan into a 'Princely State', a term that general D.M. Stewart, the commanding general in Kandahar, used in March 1880 to describe the political set-up arranged by the government of India.[252] However, these policies also went beyond the native state model in that they combined different forms of direct and indirect rule.

The attempt to draw Afghanistan into the 'feudal' political order of princely states that had emerged after the Mutiny led to the enactment of policies aimed at integrating the region into the British Indian empire. While on-the-ground decisions were largely driven by local contingencies, they were part of a long-term project of governing this region through forms of indirect rule.[253] British officials in Kabul and Kandahar, and their colleagues in the government of India discussed and evaluated different options for the administration of the country: annexation, direct management, stationing of garrisons, placement of allied native rulers under the supervision of a British agent or resident.[254] In practice, British experiments in Afghan government were a complex scenario in that these options were at various times implemented, contested, and merged together in a process that engaged local intermediaries, colonial sociology and imperial policy, in ways not dissimilar to the considerations that had informed earlier colonial expansion in the subcontinent.[255]

In practice, British plans for Afghanistan envisioned breaking up this polity into separate and subordinated states.[256] The main provinces of Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Khulm, Kunduz and Badakhshan had been first unified during the reign

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[252] 'Nos. 348-355A, Recognition of Sirdar Sher Ali Khan as Ruler of the Province of Kandahar', April 1880, sec. 350, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[253] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 180; Jon Wilson, 'The Making of a Colonial Order: Information, Uncertainty and Law in Early Colonial Bengal', *Centre for South Asian Studies Occasional Papers* 6 (2003).
[254] 'No. 556, Policy Proposed to Be Adopted towards Securing the Permanent Tranquillity of the Northern Frontier of India in Regard to Afghanistan Generally', January 1880, Foreign Department, SS, K.W., NAI.
[255] Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 5.
[256] 'Mss Eur F132/23, Cavagnari Correspondence'. Demi-Official Correspondence between Lyall and Sir Louis Cavagnari, British Resident at Kabul [Some Printed] , with Printed Copies of Letters from Cavagnari to Sir G.P. Colley, P.S.V. to Lord Lytton', 1879 1878, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.

of Dost Muhammad Khan, who ruled as amir of Kabul between 1826 and 1838 and then again after the first Afghan war between 1842 and 1864. Before 1855 the province of Kandahar had been an independent polity under Kohendil Khan.[257] In 1868, after the four-year civil war that followed the death of Dost Muhammad Khan, amir Shere Ali Khan managed to reunite these provinces under the authority of Kabul.[258] The stationing of a British resident in Kabul and the military occupation of Kandahar aimed at weakening Kabul and linking southern Afghanistan closer to British India. However, it was only with the transformation of Kabul and Kandahar into two separate states that this idea was fully formalised. In the winter of 1879 the 'disintegration of the late Afghan kingdom' was regarded by Lytton as an 'incontrovertible fact and accepted as the basis of any future arrangements between the Government of India and the chiefs or populations of the territories recently united under the Amir of Kabul'.[259] Lord Lytton suggested the division of the polity into three areas of increasing British influence and intervention: 'Kandahar and the neighbouring districts should be immediately and permanently annexed to the British Empire', in addition to the frontier districts of Pishin, Kurram and Khost, already assigned to British India under the treaty of Gandamak.[260] Lytton further argued that 'for the country up to the Hindu Kush direct annexation [was] undesirable, but necessary to maintain British garrison at Kabul and other points with military supremacy throughout this tract, for which it should be made to pay'. Moreover, 'beyond the Hindu Kush we can certainly exercise no administrative authority, we can only assert political supremacy'.[261] The permanent annexation of Kandahar was eventually set aside and the formation of 'tributary or […] dependent States' in Kandahar and Kabul was agreed upon, while Herat was to be ceded to Persia with the mandate to administer the province under British supervision.[262] The on-the-ground experiments with arranging for the government of Afghanistan under British supervision led to forms of rule that juggled between direct and indirect rule, mimicking the Indian model of residencies and agencies.

[257] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 82.
[258] Ibid., 89.
[259] 'No. 556', 2.
[260] 'Nos. 350-352, Sir A. Arbuthnot's Dissent from the Policy Proposed to Be Pursued in Afghanistan Consequent on the Abdication of the Amir', November 1879, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[261] Ibid.
[262] 'No. 556', 7.

The literature on the British occupation of Afghanistan during the second Afghan war is extremely limited. Most of the available material is found in the field of military history, including a number of contemporary accounts.[263] Political historians, on the other hand, have touched this period only in passing, as a section in broader histories of the region.[264] Considered as a short interlude in the emergence of the Afghan state between the reigns of Shere Ali Khan and Abdur Rahman, its wider implications in their state-building have so far been overlooked. Largely bound by a teleological narrative that sees the establishment of modern state institutions in Afghanistan as an endogenous process, historians have failed to question what implications the external forces embedded in the British presence – political and military – had for the Afghan political and social landscape. This chapter reconsiders the second Afghan war within the framework of its political, rather than military implications. It shows that the conflict was a formative period for Afghan history, rather than a minor episode in Afghan national history or in the history of Anglo-Afghan relations. It places this episode of Anglo-Afghan interaction within the broader framework of the history of British colonial expansion in the Subcontinent. By looking at the attempts at reforming Afghan political geography and administration in Kabul and Kandahar, this chapter views the military occupation as central to understanding the external influences on Afghan state building in the second half of the century.

The first part of this chapter discusses the establishment in June 1879 of a British residency in Kabul under Pierre Louis Cavagnari. It shows that British India was on the way to building influence on the amir and his court through the same system it had employed in the subcontinent in its dealings with the native states. In Kabul, the Cavagnari experiment ended abruptly as the resident and his staff were killed, temporarily halting the establishment of full British control over Afghanistan's political affairs. The second section discusses the military invasion of Afghanistan

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[263] H. B. (Henry Bathurst) Hanna, *The Second Afghan War, 1878-79-80: Its Causes, Its Conduct and Its Consequences* (London: A. Constable, 1899); Howard Hensman, *Afghan War of 1879-80* (London: Allen, 1882); *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80. Abridged Official Account*; Joshua Duke, *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign, 1879 & 1880* (London: W. H. Allen & co., 1883); Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, *War in Afghanistan, 1879-80: The Personal Diary of Major General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor*, ed. William Trousdale (Detroit: Wayne State Univ Pr, 1985).

[264] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*; George Fletcher MacMunn, *Afghanistan: From Darius to Amanullah* (London: G. Bell & sons, 1929); Barfield, *Afghanistan*; Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*; Sykes, *History of Afghanistan*; T. A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars, 1839-1919* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2003).

and the occupation of Kabul by general Frederick Roberts that followed the death of the resident. The occupation led to the establishment of a British government that used both direct and indirect means to govern the province. The administration Roberts presided over aspired to establish a quasi-colonial form of government. In Kabul, he attempted to establish those institutions, such as land revenue, policing, administration of law that characterised the colonial state in India in its more mature form. At the same time, Roberts also attempted to expand his government's influence towards Ghazni, Badakhshan, Turkistan and Herat. In so doing, he drew on local intermediaries, who were sent to these regions to establish allied governments. The networks of cooperation the British authorities forged in northern Afghanistan were informed by ethnic and sectarian categories: many of the intermediaries Roberts drew on were non-Pashtun and Shia, a pattern that was replicated also during the 1884-7 Afghan Boundary Commission, as chapter three will show. The last part of the chapter discusses British rule in southern Afghanistan. Kandahar had been occupied in January 1879 and had experienced the imposition of a British-led government comparable to Kabul. However, unlike Kabul, where Roberts tapped into the administrative structures still in place at the start of the occupation, in Kandahar British authorities were managing a crumbling administration.[265] They engaged with both direct and indirect rule and in so doing steadily relied on the cooperation of Sirdar Shere Ali Khan, a Durrani noble who they appointed governor of the city. He became the key figure through which the government of India envisioned the establishment of a long-term administration in southern Afghanistan that was linked to the Subcontinent and controlled by the government of India. The Sardar was employed in the creation of an administration, army force and in the extension of the new Kandahari state's boundaries westwards to Herat. In so doing, Shere Ali used his own family and clan network, assigning all relevant administrative posts to members of the Durrani tribe, who thus gained disproportionate power in the city.

Experiments of (in)direct rule in Kabul: building British paramountcy through 'traditional' rule

After the signing of the treaty of Gandamak in May 1879 a British resident, Pierre Louis Cavagnari, was appointed at the court of Kabul. The former political officer in the Khyber reached the city in June 1879, where he remained until his death the

[265] I am grateful to Dr James Caron for pointing out this difference.

following September, when the British residency was attacked by a mutinous regiment of the Afghan army.[266] With the establishment of a residency, the government of India – the viceroy and the secretary of state were the main decision-makers – hoped to secure the same level of supervision over Afghan politics and affairs it had been able to achieve in the subcontinent. There, the system of residencies had been in place since the early nineteenth century and was used as an instrument of indirect control over the princely states. There had been significant variation in the way the system was implemented and the powers and restrictions conferred to the residents. The establishment of a residency system in Afghanistan made any additional annexation of territory unnecessary. The appointment of Cavagnari as resident became the main instrument through which greater British influence over the government of Kabul was to be achieved. Significantly, parallel to the arrival of Cavagnari at Kabul the British Indian Army started withdrawing from southern Afghanistan, which had been under military occupation since January 1879 and which was to be handed over to a native governor appointed by the amir.[267] Thus, by the summer of 1879 the viceroy believed that the presence of Cavagnari had achieved the type of relationship the Lytton administration had been seeking since 1876 and which envisioned the extension of British imperial paramountcy without the burden of direct government.[268]

During the months Cavagnari resided in Kabul he attempted to increase his influence over local decision-making, often through the ambiguous strategies and tones that had characterised the political manoeuvrings of India's residencies. Cavagnari argued that the amir's administration was corrupt and ineffective and thus sought to bypass it and forge ties with the political establishment in Kabul. He notably drew on the group of local interlocutors he had been in contact with in the years preceding the war, such as Sardar Muhammad Khan, half brother of the late amir Shere Ali Khan and the principal Afghan intermediary of the British.[269] Significantly, the government of India had insisted for the inclusion in the treaty of Gandamak of a clause (Clause 2) safeguarding the personalities, such as the Khan of Lalpura, who had cooperated with the British before and during the first military advance and who

[266] *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80. Abridged Official Account*.
[267] 'Nos. 215-241, Negotiation with Amir Yakub Khan', June 1879, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[268] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 52–60; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 48–87.
[269] Foreign Office, India, *Biographical Accounts of Chiefs, Sardars, and Others of Afghanistan* (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1888), 212.

were now assisting Cavagnari in Kabul.[270] From the outset Cavagnari tried to use his contacts to pressure the amir to reform the administration, drawing on ideas of British moral and political superiority.[271] In practice, Cavagnari was actively 'feeling [his] way with the Amir's chief counsellors', trying to secure them in the British interest in order to 'procure some reforms'.[272] He also pressured the amir for a joint visit of the 'frontiers of Afghanistan', notably at Herat and Turkestan.[273] He pointed out to Yakub Khan that the population of Kabul itself was looking at the British representative to redress years of oppression by their rulers. In the short time he resided in Kabul, Cavagnari succeeded in building some influence over Kabuli politics. The amir's ministers declared to him that the 'wishes of the British Government' would be taken into consideration when provincial governors and political envoys to Central Asia were appointed.[274] On the whole, although Cavagnari's leverage over the court remained imperfect, his experiment in indirect influence demonstrated that the long-term goal of the government of India was the establishment of a fully functioning residency. Therefore, while his influence remained potential at this point, his presence also added a new element to the Afghan political landscape, which crucially questioned the authority of the amir.

The political influence Cavagnari was expected to gain in Kabul was continuously counterbalanced by proclamations of non-interference by the government of India. The viceroy maintained, at least in public, a hands-off approach to the internal affairs of Afghanistan and urged the resident to abstain from prematurely interfering in Kabuli politics:

> [What] is represented by the presence of a British Envoy at Kabul is the support given by the Brit Government to the Amir's authority and not the establishment of a foreign surveillance over the exercise of that authority in every detail of the Afghan administration. It is certainly desirable to create an English party at Kabul; but it is still more desirable that there should be throughout Afghanistan no party that is really anti-English.[275]

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[270] 'Nos. 488-533, Intelligence Regarding State of Affairs and Progress of Military Operations', October 1879, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[271] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 166.
[272] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[273] 'Nos. 22-29, Kabul Diaries from 27th July to 16th Aug. 1879', September 1879, sec. 23, Foreign Department, Secret. Kabul Affairs, NAI.
[274] 'Nos. 177-178, Kabul Diary for Week Ending 23rd August 1879', September 1879, sec. 177, Foreign Department. Secret. Kabul Affairs, NAI.
[275] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.

Historians of India have shown that the presence of the British officials at native courts was often highly controversial. Residents became involved in the internal affairs of the state to different degrees, ranging from full direct rule to very limited interference.[276] In the case of Cavagnari, Lord Lytton made it plainly understood to the resident that he was authorised to instruct the amir on his role in the new course of Anglo-Afghan relations and make British influence felt at court:

> […] at the very first indication of the slightest disposition on the part of Yakub Khan to swagger, or shirk, in his dealings with us on any question, His Highness should, at once, be pulled up sharp and made to mend his paces. In the amicable and useful alliance between the horse and the man, the question, which of the two is to be master of the other, cannot be left and open question.[277]

The ambiguity between direct interference and abstention reproduced in many ways the relations between the Indian native rulers and the colonial state. The means through which Cavagnari was supposed to exert his influence over the amir and his court were never officially formalised but they were largely left, once again, to the understanding of the man on the spot. Indeed, the resident continually tried to negotiate greater leeway from the viceroy and questioned the policy of formal non-interference. He notably used the argument of the amir's misadministration to lobby the government of India for greater powers to intervene in Yakub Khan's administration.[278] As in the case of paramountcy, discussed in the previous chapter, Afghan subordination was never explained nor delimited. If compared to the type of subordination the government of India sought in the late 1880s and 1890s, British presence during the war was more invasive than the 'subsidiary alliance system' in that it aimed at establishing a form of quasi-colonial rule.[279]

In the long term, the amir was expected to act in accordance with British advice and shape his policies on British instructions, while maintaining a *façade* of sovereignty. The experiment of the Cavagnari residency in Kabul showed that the government of India was on the way to achieving concrete influence over the Kabuli court, which replicated the model of the British resident at native courts in India. The death of the resident in September 1879 temporarily halted this experiment and led to

[276] Robin Jeffrey, 'The Politics of "indirect Rule": Types of Relationship among Rulers, Ministers and Residents in a "native State"', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 13, no. 3 (1 November 1975): 261–81; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 53–54.
[277] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 166.

a new phase of British attempts at controlling Afghanistan. This phase saw the use of direct and indirect forms of government, which were informed by the same rationale but differed from the model of the residency. Thus, the death of Cavagnari in September 1879 did not halt the extension of British influence over Kabul but opened the door for increased interference.

From residency to direct government: building colonial institutions in Kabul province

After the attack of the British residency, general Roberts was immediately placed at the head of a new invasion force and sent to Kabul, which reached the city in October 1879. Roberts' goal was to occupy the city and re-establish a British presence there. At the same time, as will be detailed below, the withdrawal of British troops from Kandahar, which had been planned since July 1879, was halted. The transfer of the city's government to Yakub Khan's governor was also suspended. In northern Afghanistan, Roberts established, at least in the first phase of the occupation, a form of direct administration that included the management of the surrounding provinces and attempted to extend British influence as far as Turkestan. This was followed by a period of diarchy, in which the city was co-administered by Roberts and a native governor or Wali, Sirdar Muhammad Khan. Kandahar followed a similar path. British authorities directly ruled the city from January 1879 to August 1880, when Sirdar Shere Ali Khan was appointed as native governor and, like the native governor of Kabul, became the main intermediary in the administration of southern Afghanistan. In both cases, native intermediaries acted in collaboration and under the supervision of the British authorities, who retained ultimate decision-making powers thus progressively eroding the sovereign position of the amir.

From the outset, the viceroy entrusted Roberts with important political duties that pointed to a long-term political project for northern Afghanistan. The episode of the residency opened the door for the enactment of experiments in colonial rule that were modelled on the Indian residency system, but went well beyond it, engaging indirect as well as direct rule. Lyall, the foreign secretary to the government of India, briefed about the changes Cavagnari's death had brought to British India's relations with the amir:

> Although nothing can now be said in regard to the future internal administration of Afghanistan, the Government of India cannot ignore the

> possibility of being forced to exercise over that administration a closer and more direct control than has hitherto been contemplated or desired.[280]

Contrary to how historians have often understood the second military campaign started in October 1879, the invasion of Afghanistan was not a swift retribution for the resident's murder and should be understood as a concrete attempt to reclaim the influence the death of Cavagnari had undermined.[281] From the outset, the foreign secretary envisioned the concrete possibility that reclaiming British position in Kabul could entail more than the reinstatement of the residency system. The instructions Lyall sent Roberts at the end of September 1879, directed him to 'assume and exercise supreme administrative authority' over Kabul, while at the same time punishing the culprits of the embassy attack:

> On reaching Kabul take up position securing complete command over city, enforce surrender of fortified posts, disarm troops and city people, take measures for collecting supplies pending connections for your communications with permanent Peshawar base; secure personal safety of Amir with due control over his movements, prevent withdrawal pending inquiry of persons suspected of complicity in attack on Embassy and begin close enquiry as soon as you are established at Kabul, make known to people generally our determination to treat all classes with justice, to respect their religion, feelings, and customs, while exacting full retribution from offenders. Punishment should be speedy and impressive without being indiscriminate or prolonged, but take no action beyond what is needed for safe custody or surveillance of Amir or other persons whose cases may need special consideration without reference for orders of Government.[282]

Roberts' advance was as much a military as a political mission. It was not only meant to re-install the residency system in the city, but aimed at securing a long-term British presence in northern Afghanistan.

The murder of the resident was seen as a direct attack on the relation of subordination British India had forced on the Kabul government since the mid-1870s. As seen in chapter one, the continued pressure for closer relations, the ultimatum to place a British resident in Kabul and the annexation of parts of the suzerain possession of the amir had incrementally made Afghanistan into a subordinate polity whose position could now not be reverted. The political powers Roberts was invested with triggered a phase of direct British hold over parts of Afghanistan, which placed the British authorities in complete command over the civil administration of the city

[280] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[281] Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 122–23.
[282] 'Nos. 488-533'; 'Mss Eur F132/23'.

and its surrounding province. In the instructions given by Lyall, the amir was to be placed under British custody, thus becoming *de facto* a British prisoner. The strategies the British authorities in Kabul devised for administering the city – especially the establishment of a powerful Commission of Enquiry that ultimately charged the amir with murder – irremediably entangled the sovereignty of the amir with the resident's death. In this sense, Roberts' role was radically different from that of a resident because of the extent of his interference in local politics and impact on the amir's authority.

Official proclamations by the government of India again reflected the ambiguity of British intervention, which uneasily balanced the amir's formal sovereignty and the assertion of British authority. On the one hand, the government declared that Roberts was marching on Kabul in order to provide 'assistance to the Amir and restoration of [his] authority'.[283] The advance was publicly legitimised by its role in supporting the amir and 'restoring his authority […] over his rebellious troops'.[284] On the other, once installed in the city in mid-October Roberts publicly pointed to the amir's 'present powerlessness to fulfil his engagement and [his] loss of authority'.[285] In a *durbar* held in the Bala Hissar, the royal palace, Roberts read out a proclamation to the 'Sirdars and native gentlemen' of the city in which he announced the enforcement of martial law and intimated the 'inhabitants of Kabul and neighbouring villages' to 'submit to [the] authority' of the new British military governor.[286] In a different proclamation, dated 11 October, Roberts announced that the inhabitants of Kabul, who were opposing the advance of his troops towards the city, had 'become rebels against His Highness the Amir'.[287] To a certain degree then, British authorities continued to uphold the amir as the *de jure* sovereign power, while publicly highlighting his subordination to the invading forces. In Roberts' statements the authority of the amir and the presence of the British became one connected entity: fighting against the one automatically meant challenging the authority of the other. However, resistance to the British troops was singled out as rebellion to the amir,

[283] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[284] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23, Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures Received from India, Vol 23', December 1879, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL; 'Nos. 337-392, Intelligence Regarding State of Affairs and Progress of Military Operations in Afghanistan, Following on the Massacre of the British Embassy at Kabul', October 1879, sec. 380, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[285] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[286] 'Nos. 337-392', sec. 339.
[287] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 527.

while, at the same time, British officials started to carve out a position independent from that of Yakub Khan. However, the amir himself, who had become a British puppet in the eyes of the Afghans – similar accusations had been moved towards Dost Muhammad Khan in the 1850s because of British financial support to the ruler – put an end to this ambiguity by relinquishing the amirship in October 1879 and thus leaving northern Afghanistan without a ruler.[288]

However, attempts at curtailing the amir's sovereignty and imposing British authority were not readily accepted by all political actors and were at times actively challenged. The military operations that led to the occupation of Kabul had unleashed a generalised political instability in the territories under the authority of the former amir of Kabul. After the start of the British military operations in 1878, the amir had been faced with increasing instability an unrest in many regions: different political authorities, such as Turkestan, Badakhshan, Kohistan, attempted to break away from Kabul's suzerainty and end revenue relations.[289] Similar to what had happened in the wake of the first Afghan war (1839-42), in these areas rebellions had arisen as a result of the changing power relations that followed Cavagnari's arrival. The amir had been struggling to halt this process of disintegration, especially since the government had become unable to secure pay to its military.[290] Herat notably succeeded in carving out an independent status for itself as a *de facto* separate state over which the British never managed to extend any control.[291]

Instability in various areas continued as Roberts was establishing his rule in Kabul and some local powers challenged the British presence. Important political personalities, such as the governor of Ghazni, Muhammad Saib Agha, tried to challenge the British presence in the city.[292] In October 1879 he proclaimed to the governors of Mukur and Kelat, south of Ghazni, that 'the Amir has been reinstated in full authority, and that Roberts has proclaimed by beat of drum that he and the army are only guests of four days and will retire at once'.[293] The governor tried to

[288] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 250.
[289] 'Nos. 22-29', sec. 23.
[290] 'Nos. 177-178', sec. 177; 'Nos. 22-29', sec. 23; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 56.
[291] 'Nos. 301-359, Intelligence from Afghanistan Regarding Military Operations and Affairs in That Country', January 1880, sec. 309, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[292] 'Nos. 239-273, Occurrences in Afghanistan – 20th November 1879', November 1879, sec. 271, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[293] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 493.

undermine the position Roberts had carved out for the British in Kabul as the new *de facto* rulers of northern Afghanistan. In reply, the government of India instructed Roberts to send the governor of Ghazni a 'formal notice of the Amir's abdication with distinct orders to obey [British] military authority under pain of treatment as rebel'.[294] Figures such as the governor of Ghazni openly attempted to resist the extension of British authority from its centre at Kabul. Roberts repeatedly tried to dismiss the governor of Ghazni and appoint a friendly figure in his stead, also with the help of the Hazara community, as will be seen below. Significantly, by December 1879 the city became the centre of a major insurgency that crucially challenged British hold over northern Afghanistan.[295] In the case of Lalpura, a polity between Kabul and Peshawar over which the Afghan amirs had been exercising suzerain powers, open resistance to the British invasion was displayed through the local ruler's appeal to the sovereignty of the amir over the British and his initial refusal to collaborate with the British. The challenge British authority was facing, which turned into outward dissent on a number of occasions, indicated that the authority of the amir was not as hollow as the British authorities were portraying it. Therefore, while some provinces, tribes and political factions acknowledged British supremacy, many others did not.

On his arrival in the city Roberts established a form of direct control over Kabul's administration. He informed Lyall at the end of October 1879 that he had decided to carry out the 'government of the country' under his 'immediate supervision, without the declared aid of any Afghan Chief or Sirdar'.[296] He maintained that he preferred a direct British administration to the 'formation of a provisional native government' because he was 'convinced that no good could result from the introduction of any Afghan element into the administration'.[297] He specified his arrangements regarding the government of the city thus:

> The exercise of supreme authority over the city and over the surrounding country to a distance of ten miles from the city walls, I have delegated to Major General Hills, VC, CB, he will be assisted by Nawab Ghulam Hassan Khan, KCSI, and every measure of importance which he may consider it desirable to introduce will be submitted for my sanction and carried out under my general supervision.[298]

[294] Ibid.
[295] Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 165–72.
[296] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 268; 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[297] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 268.
[298] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'; 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 526.

Major general Hills was appointed as 'Military Governor of Kabul', in charge of 'administering justice and punishing all evil doers'.[299] At the same time, Roberts publicly declared that he had 'taken possession of the State Treasury' and charge of the 'collection of revenue and the expenditure of public money'.[300] British authorities imposed a regime of martial law on the city and disarmed the population. General Hills was assisted in his office by Nawab Sir Gholam Hassan Khan, but Roberts maintained ultimate decision-making power in his hands.[301] The Nawab was a member of the British occupation forces and Knight Commander of the Star of India. He was described by Roberts as a 'frontier Chief' and became a key link between the occupation forces and the local population and chiefs.[302] The general circulated proclamations to advertise his rulings along the line of march between Peshawar and Kabul and in the districts surrounding Kabul.[303] When the amir abdicated, at the beginning of October 1879, Roberts attempted to act as a ruler and started to direct the loyalties of provincial governors and the Kabuli elite towards himself and his military governor. The measures enacted by Roberts during the first months of occupation put the British *de facto* in charge of the administration. At the same time, he also managed to make use of much of the lower cadres of the bureaucracy who continued to remain in place. Roberts directed 'all Afghan authorities, Sirdars and Chiefs' to 'continue in their functions' and to refer to him 'whenever necessary'.[304] This was a very different practice from the set-up British authorities were faced with in Kandahar, where local administration virtually dissolved upon British arrival. On the contrary, in Kabul they managed to work through an existing state structure.

Roberts' administration of the city and its surroundings aimed at making Kabul and its British occupants the political centres of a new polity carved out in northern Afghan. They attempted to establish a new political, if not social, order. Similar to what Bernard Cohn has theorised for British relations with the native chiefs

[299] 'Mss Eur F132/23'.
[300] Ibid.; 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 268.
[301] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 526.
[302] Ibid.; 'IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO3, Afghanistan. Various Memoranda. Political Department - Edmund Neel', 1885 1854, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL; 'Mss Eur F132/24, Sir F. Roberts'. Demi-Official Correspondence between Lyall and Sir Frederick Sleigh Roberts (Later Lord Roberts), Commander of the Kabul Field Force [Some Printed]', 1880 1878, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.
[303] 'Nos. 152-191, Intelligence Regarding Affairs in Afghanistan, and Progress of Military Operations in That Country', November 1879, sec. 157, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[304] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 528.

in the second half of the nineteenth century, in Afghanistan 'the British crown' and its representatives started to be 'seen as the centre of authority, and capable of ordering into a single hierarchy all its subjects'.[305] In Kabul, British authorities tried to create a similar system, in which local political elites and the population saw them as the new legitimate rulers. Roberts shaped an administrative system that forged relations with local elites, including the amir's ministers. It reproduced the type of relations British authorities had sought in the frontier districts of Kurram and Khost, where they were ruling through native political networks of local chiefs and headmen.[306] In Kabul, proclamations about the change of authority and the holding of durbars became important instruments for establishing the legitimacy of British rule, crucial for the dissemination of British ideas of governance and the making of political links with local elites and tribal leaders.

During these occasions, employed by Mughal and well as British rulers in the subcontinent, khilluts, or symbolical robes of honour were distributed. These robes were an integral part of the rituals that characterised the durbar setting, in which participants were ordered by rules of precedence and hierarchy. In this context, khilluts established relations between an overlord and his inferiors.[307] It amounted to an 'act of loyalty' with which the overlord was recognised as the 'political authority of the realm'.[308] Christine Noelle-Karimi points out that in 1850, following Dost Muhammad Khan's conquest of Balkh, the local rulers of Turkistan 'formally declared their submission to Afghan authority by offering presents and receiving robes of honour'. She argues that this amounted to a 'show of obedience' that was common practice in Afghanistan.[309] In Kabul, khilluts were distributed to those figures who had assisted the British and were willing to enter into their service. In the Mughal and then British order, khilluts presented 'acts of obedience, pledges of loyalty, and the acceptance of the superiority of the giver of the *khelat*'.[310] Robes of honour were interpreted and used by the British administration in Kabul in a similar way. Roberts, likely on the lines the so-called Sandeman system had laid down in

[305] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 180.
[306] 'Nos. 337-392'.
[307] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 168; 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'; Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 187.
[308] Anand A. Yang, *The Limited Raj: Agrarian Relations in Colonial India, Saran District, 1793-1920* (Delhi: University of Oxford Press, 1989), 27.
[309] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 86.
[310] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 169.

Baluchistan from 1876, sought the collaboration of the local political establishment to maintain order in the province.[311] The abdication of Yakub Khan, announced on 22 October 1879, drew the population of Kabul closer to the newly established British power. Since then, Roberts reported, 'many influential men' had come in and offered their services.[312] At the same time, many of the headmen of the villages and districts surrounding Kabul – Tezin, Surkhab, Jellabad area – were joining the general in Kabul, where they attended his durbars and offered their services.[313] We know very little about the form and content of these durbars but we can assume that they were ordered, in line with Indian practice, according to precedence and British understanding of local hierarchies.[314] Roberts managed relations with the surrounding districts, as well as the polities and tribes on the line of communication between the city and Peshawar, such as Jellalabad. These links also aimed at connecting the occupied frontier polities with Kabul, in an attempt to make the city the new centre for frontier management.[315]

Land revenue, policing, administration of justice: integrating modern instruments of governance in a traditional political landscape

British administration in Kabul intervened in the policing of the city, administration of justice, the appointment of governors in the surrounding districts and the collection of revenue. Roberts continued to hold durbars in the city to which the 'leading men' were coming from the outside districts to 'see him and tender […] submission to him'.[316] The authority he was invested with as the new *de facto* ruler of the province expanded outside the city and led to the replacement of many of the current governors with British nominees. In November 1879 he appointed new figures in Kohistan (Shahbaz Khan), Maisan (Muhammad Hassan Khan) and Logar (Abdulla Khan), districts surrounding Kabul which had historically been the main source of revenue for the amir of Kabul.[317] These governors were sent to the districts with considerable advances in cash to organise the collection of revenue.[318]

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[311] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 57.
[312] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 268.
[313] 'Nos. 152-191', secs 157–158.
[314] Cohn, 'Representing Authority in Victorian India', 181.
[315] 'Nos. 337-392', secs 343, 348.
[316] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[317] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 251; 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 274.
[318] 'Nos. 239-273'; 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.

The appointment of new provincial officials went hand in hand with new measures introduced in the revenue collection, which abandoned the current system of what Roberts called 'district collections'[319]. The information we have on the collection of land revenue in Afghanistan before the Afghan war is sparse and often contradictory. Christine Noelle-Karimi has shown that around the middle of the century revenue collection was very uneven and largely targeted the tribes inhabiting the trade routes connecting Kabul to Kandahar and Peshawar, leaving large sweats of country outside the collection of taxes. Government interference reached out from the administrative centres of Kabul, Jalalabad, Ghazni and Kandahar in concentric circles and progressively diminished with increasing distance from the main cities. Noelle-Karimi argues that in the 1850s 'even in the areas which were fairly firmly incorporated into the Muhammadzai [a clan of the Barakzai sub-tribe] administration the government presence tended to be thin'.[320] As Roberts pointed out:

> I have arranged to discontinue the direct collection of forage. Each district will now be required to produce a certain amount of bhoosa, grass, etc. An influential man will be sent out to each with an advance of money and made responsible for the collection of the whole amount assessed. This plan seems likely to prove less troublesome and more effective than the system of direct collection.[321]

During the reigns of Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali the revenue paying districts of the Kabul region had been administered by governors who sent revenue to Kabul. Revenue was collected by local chiefs or governors (*hakim)* and submitted to Kabul by the officials in charge of the province, rather than claimed by the central treasury through *ad hoc* tax collectors.

British authorities in Kabul partially reversed this system. They introduced new figures who were appointed by Roberts in Kabul and given charge of the collection in the districts. This system reversed the largely non-interfering system that had been used at least since Dost Muhammad Khan.[322] At the same time, land revenue collection directed from Kabul rather than by the districts themselves also triggered changes in the distribution of resources between the local administration and the centre. Noelle-Karimi points out that during Dost Muhammad Khan's reign the

[319] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 251.
[320] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 219.
[321] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[322] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 219.

amounts raised varied based on the amount of land given out in form *jagir* or *tiyul* as service grants to local chiefs.[323] The revenue that eventually reached the state treasury in Kabul was often quite slim. After distributing a substantial part of the revenue to the local elites in the form of allowances – jagirs and special allowances for the Pashtun khans – another portion was claimed by the leading local chiefs in the form of special allowances.[324] In fact, Dost Muhammad Khan treated the provinces as jagirs 'awarded to the governor' rather than as the 'lower rungs of an administrational hierarchy', and they were largely administered independently.[325] In contrast, the system introduced during the British occupation aimed at assessing 'each district for lump payment' of produce directly from Kabul, bypassing the role of the *jagir* holder and thus bringing some first rudimentary changes to what had traditionally been a decentralised system of revenue collection.[326] We do not have detailed information about whether Roberts partially retained the system of district allowances, but his effort in centralising regional political loyalties around his Kabul *durbar* point to the investiture of new personalities with political power. Dost Muhammad Khan had already attempted to erase local revenue privileges in the hope of increasing revenue, but British attempts during the war seemed to be of a more radical type.[327]

We might hypothesise that the political and armed resistance the occupation of Kabul faced since December 1879 was partially due to British authorities redirecting resources previously allotted to certain groups in the district towards different personalities. Roberts assumed a key role in making appointments and forging alliances with local nobles and communities. The governors chosen by Roberts and and the British-appointed governor Sirdar Muhammad Khan played a key role in securing the continuation of revenue collection, vital for sustaining the presence of about 6.000 Indian Army soldiers in Kabul, and integrating the surrounding provinces closer with Kabul. Similarly, in Jellalabad revenue in kind, collected in the form of agricultural produce and cattle, was also collected by the local governor and then handed over to the British Commissariat, probably in full although

[323] Ibid., 267–74.
[324] Ibid., 220.
[325] Ibid., 58.
[326] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 251; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 268.
[327] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 222.

exact information is missing.[328] The changes he introduced to the system of revenue collection bound the assessment of cultivated land with new personalities nominated from Kabul, aimed at creating new networks of patronage accountable to British authorities.

British authorities did not only take over the management of land revenue in the province of Kabul, but they also intervened in the maintenance of law and order in the city and its outskirts. In Kabul itself, British authorities set up a system of police into which natives were recruited, often drawn from the former Afghan Army. In fact, Roberts was trying to bring in the disbanded troops of the Shere Ali's regiments that had been roaming around the country since the break-up of the late amir's government and the British occupation of the city. At the beginning of the occupation Indian Army sepoys were employed as guards in key positions around the city with the task to secure security and order. However, from November 1879, Roberts reported that these had been replaced by 'native chowkidars'.[329] We do not know in detail from which groups Roberts recruited the native policemen for the city, but his employment of local army men points to the willingness to integrate Shere Ali's institutions of the state with the administrative arrangements he was devising during the occupation.

The administration of justice, which evolved out of the Commission of Enquiry Roberts set up in late October 1879, similarly drew on local intermediaries in its task of finding and trying suspects of Cavagnari's murder. The tasks of the Commission ended up seeping into the day-to-day administration of the province and led to the trial of criminal law cases, thus pushing the jurisdiction of the commission well beyond the investigation of the embassy attack. The way British authorities approached the government of the city highlighted the intended longevity of their political project. They established some key institutions in the city – police, intelligence apparatus, administration of justice – which were meant to be far from temporary measures. Moreover, these same institutions defined the form the colonial state had assumed by the end of the nineteenth century.[330] The structures created mimicked those that had characterised colonial expansion into the Subcontinent and

[328] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 173; MacGregor, *Central Asia Calcutta*, Pt. II:61–63; Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 123,125.
[329] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 244.
[330] Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*; Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885-1947* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule, Madras, 1859-1947*.

attempted to reproduce a relation with northern Afghanistan's population that could be defined as colonial.[331] Thus, the experiments in governing Kabul were not limited at the establishment of indirect rule, but were shaping the contours of an embryonic colony, thus showing that this polity in the making was to become much more than a native state within British India's orbit.

Expanding British influence: intermediaries, suzerains and local networks at the service of empire

The British state-building effort in northern Afghanistan sought to extend the Kabul-centred state beyond the boundaries of the immediate province. Roberts and his officers tried to expand their authority over parts of Afghanistan they were not in direct control of, such as the province of Ghazni, in the South-East, Herat in the West, Badakhshan and Turkestan in the North. Previous to the war, these provinces had been intermittently controlled by the amir, who had struggled to maintain direct control over them.[332] In early November 1879, writing to Lyall, the foreign secretary, Roberts admitted that 'there is no certainty as to the intentions of Ayub Khan, and the state of affairs generally in Herat and northern provinces'. He pointed out that he was confident to be able to 'succeed in exerting some pressure on the outlying provinces'.[333] At the same time, Roberts began to make plans to reach out to Turkestan. He suggested sending Sirdar Muhammad Khan in order to 'hold the province' for the British authorities. The scope of this appointment was to bring 'the administration [of Turkestan] into subordination to the central authority at Kabul'.[334] Lyall pointed out that the Sirdar would have to act in northern Afghanistan unsupported by British military and financial assistance, but that, if the political situation in Turkestan allowed it, 'movements beyond the Oxus [were] not impossible'.[335] Significantly, also rulers from the wider region started to interact with the British authorities. The son of the Amir of Bokhara wrote to Roberts acknowledging the British occupation of the 'whole country [of Afghanistan]'. He offered his military assistance, which, he suggested, could be used to 'disturb this part

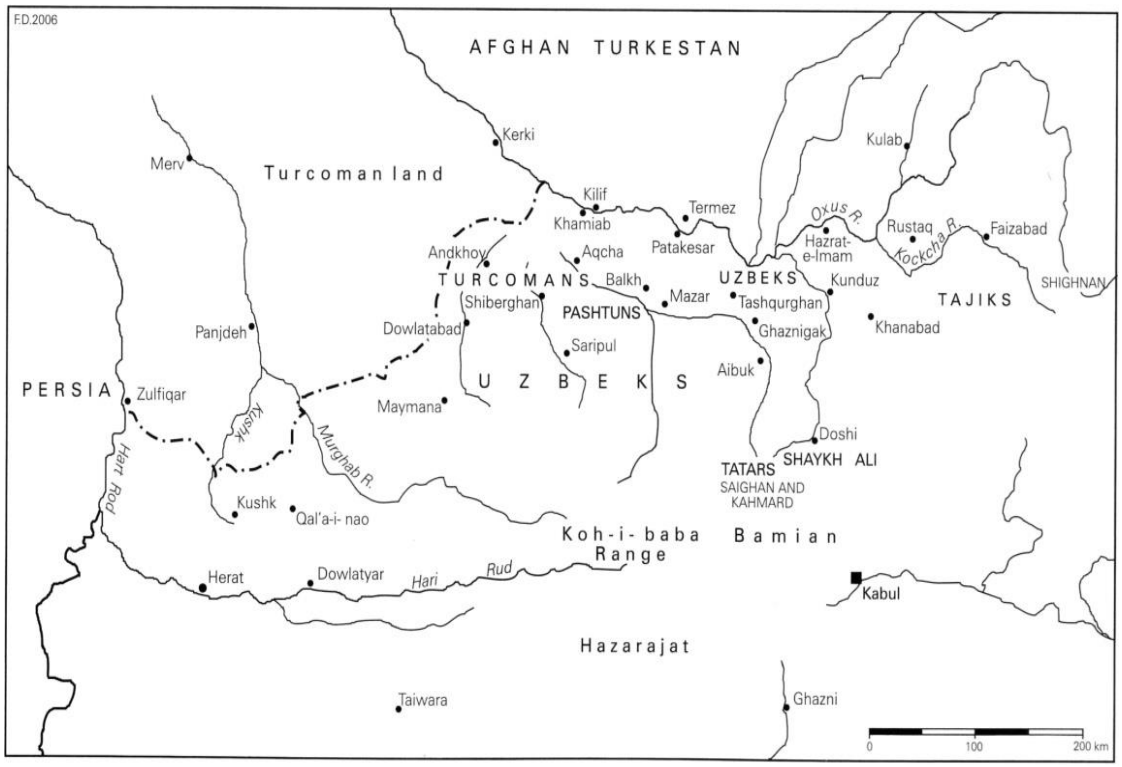
[331] Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, 15–22.
[332] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*.
[333] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 268.
[334] Ibid., sec. 272.
[335] Ibid., sec. 243.

of the country and fight the enemy (Afghans)'.[336] Similar to the strategy employed in southern Afghanistan, British authorities in Kabul employed local Sirdars and the networks and influence they commanded to expand imperial paramountcy beyond the directly controlled areas. As Lytton stated in October 1879, in the provinces beyond Kabul it was not possible to exercise 'administrative authority'. Instead, he aimed at asserting 'political supremacy' through the mediation of local intermediaries who acted as *de facto* proxy state-builders.[337]

Intermediaries played a crucial role in the British state-building project in the Afghan region. In the case of western Afghanistan for example, Roberts pointed out that, because of little information, mostly consisting of rumours, coming from that city, he proposed to 'work on Herat through Abdul Salam Khan, Ayub's father-in-law, and through Muhammud Mehdi, Khan Agha, a powerful Jamishidi Chief, who has offered his services, while Sirdar Muhammud Khan will use his influence for us in Balkh'.[338] The British authorities in Kabul created a web of political contacts that were often enlisted on the basis of their real or perceived allegiance to one tribe, sect or ethnic community, as will be seen below. In their communications with these outward provinces, British authorities styled themselves as the new rulers of the country. In many cases, provincial leaders responded or autonomously reached out to them, acknowledging their position of authority and offering to build alliances, as in the cases of Badakhshan. [339]

The semi-independent province of Badakhshan had been the object of a number of British attempts at building influence. As seen in chapter one, throughout the 1870s British India had appointed its agents in the polities of Gilgit, Chitral and Hunza that surrounded the limits of British India and which had been linked to the Subcontinent through political missions and the appointment of colonial agents.[340] In 1879 Major General Biddulph went on a political mission in Gilgit, from where he instructed Aman-ul-Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral, that he could authorise the Mirs of Badakhshan

[336] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 522.
[337] 'Nos. 350-352'.
[338] 'Nos. 239-273', secs 268, 272.
[339] 'Mss Eur F132/24'.
[340] Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*.



Map of Afghan Turkestan[341]

to 'write any petitions they wishes to make' to the Empress of India through the mediation of the Maharaja of Kashmir, the principal British ally in the region.[342] The rulers of Badakhshan wanted to 'cement [their] friendship' with both the British and the ruler of Jammu, as they 'were anxious to obtain the friendship of the British Government, and to be connected with it'.[343] Badakhshan was, like otherpolities on the fringe of British India, drawn into a system of alliances and proxy alliances with the government of India. At the same time however, the Mirs reached out Roberts in Kabul through the Mehtar, acknowledging his *de facto* position in the region:

> We the people oppressed by the Afghans desire to be taken under the auspicious shadow of those two Governments [meaning the British Indian government and the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir] and to be protected by them. And we desire that their ambassador may always reside in Badakhshan, in order that all orders for us may be most humbly carried out; for we have formerly suffered great oppression. The later Amir having disobeyed, and turned his face away from the British Government, the victorious army of that power took possession of the cities of Afghanistan; we then seized the opportunity of delivering our country. Now that the Amir Yakub Khan has rendered obedience and consented to become one with that

[341] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 97.
[342] 'Nos. 337-392', sec. 386.
[343] Ibid., sec. 388.

> powerful Government, has bowed his head to the dignity of the English Government, and will be guided in his path by the officers of that Government, - we also are hopeful of the shadow of favour of the Empress of India.[344]

The government of India in fact understood the proposal of the Mirs as their desire to enter 'into subordinate relations with the British Government'.[345] By November 1879, when the appointment of Sirdar Muhammad Khan to Turkestan was being discussed, Roberts pointed out that the Sirdar had been instructed not to interfere with the governor of Badakhshan because he would 'deal with him directly'.[346] In acknowledging the supremacy of the British authorities in northern Afghanistan, the Mirs thus also acknowledged the subordinate position the amir had come to occupy therefore. They offered to send revenue to Kabul as a sign of their friendship, and signal their suzerain position the *vis-à-vis* British authorities.[347] Contrary to the path taken by Herat and Ghazni for example, these rulers tried to find their place in a changing political landscape by reaching out to the British and suggesting political alliances that bypassed the amir. In the eyes of these local rulers, the amir had become an agent of the British and had lost the authority to act as their suzerain overlord. The British authorities in Kabul could now act in this role.

Genealogy, ethnicity and sect: identifying privileged partners of the empire

British policies in northern Afghanistan were informed by considerations of Afghan society and politics as divided into factions based on dynastic allegiance, community, tribe and ethnicity. In colonial reports these groups were interchangeably described as 'races', 'tribes' and sects.[348] As was the case in India, the very understanding of the nature of these groups and their relations was often blurred and imprecise.[349] In northern Afghanistan, British authorities stressed the importance of securing the allegiance of certain elements of the Muhammedzai Barakzai group. When Roberts was marching towards Kabul, Sirdar Muhammad Khan, called Wali by the British, and a 'number of other Barakzai nobles' joined the British camp. This party became an important element in the making of British rule in Kabul. The Sirdar had

[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid., sec. 391.
[346] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 244.
[347] 'Nos. 337-392', sec. 388; Gulzad, *External Influences*, 172.
[348] 'Nos. 120-133, Compensation to the Hazaras', August 1880, sec. K.W. No. 1, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[349] Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*.

'succeeded in attaching to himself […] the mass of the Barakzai Sirdars' and formed a political faction in open opposition to the amirs Shere Ali and Yakub Khan, who the British had singled out for their inability to rule, corruption and ultimate illegitimacy.[350] In fact, Roberts noted that 'the Muhammudzaias are said to have declared that they will have nothing to do with Yakub, but wish to place Wali Muhammud on the throne'.[351] At the same time, Kabul was considered as separate and different from the rest of Afghanistan for its Ghilzai majority population, who, as St. John, the political officer in Kandahar, argued, despite being considered 'pure Afghans' were 'really far less Afghan than Kandahar'.[352] The rule of the late amir, because of its large employ of Ghilzais from Kabul, had 'entirely lost its national Durani' character and had become 'a despotism, under a Durani sovereign it is true, but based solely on the arms of a less numerous, less intelligent, and more barbarous tribe, the hereditary foes of the Duranis'.[353]

British colonial understanding singled the Ghilzais out for their Persian language and the 'feeling of implacable hatred' that exists between them and the Durranis of Kandahar and Herat.[354] Colonial understanding of the 'ethnological divisions of Afghanistan' underpinned the government of India's political project for the break-up of the territories of Afghanistan into smaller states.[355] Genealogies had traditionally mapped political relations between different areas of the region. Now, the understanding of family relations – and the use of genealogical tables as a taxonomical instrument – underpinned the project of fragmenting Afghanistan.[356] The understanding of different parts of Afghanistan – Kabul, Kandahar, Turkistan, the Hazara lands – as being ethnically different and often in open antagonism to each other sustained policies for the separation of these into different polities.

Sectarian affiliation also played an important role in British political arrangements and their forging of alliances. British authorities in Afghanistan sought the collaboration of Shia groups, especially Hazaras and Kizilbash, as intermediaries in state-building. The relations between Sunni and Shia communities in Afghanistan

[350] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 182.
[351] 'Nos. 337-392', sec. 367.
[352] 'No. 556', sec. 22.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity', 237.

were understood by colonial sources as being one of 'ancient enmity' that opposed 'Afghans and Hazaras' especially.[357] British contact with these two communities dated back to the early nineteenth century. During the first Afghan war (1838-41) some representatives of the Kizilbash had 'readily joined Shah Shuja's [the British-appointed amir] administration, serving as tax collectors, clerks, and commissary suppliers for the British'.[358] While the literature has partially pointed out the links forged in the early part of the century between British and Hazaras, it has so far remained silent about this later period of deeper collaboration.[359] The Hazaras had started to be drawn into British military service at this time and recruitment continued throughout the middle of the century, allowing the government of India to maintain relations with the Hazaras residing in Afghanistan through their army people.[360] During the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar in 1879, these ties were resumed and led to an unprecedented degree of collaboration that involved direct co-optation by British authorities of these religious minorities.

During the attack on Cavagnari's residency, the Kizilbashis of Kabul offered their help in countering the attack and sent their troops to relieve the besieged British quarters.[361] Members of both the Kizilbash and Hazara community were employed by the Commission of Enquiry to identify and capture the suspects of Cavagnari's murder and some of them were permanently employed with the commission during its investigations and trials.[362] Moreover, during the occupation of Kabul, Roberts reached out to the Hazara community of Karabagh, west of Ghazni, and enlisted their cooperation in trying to extend British control over Ghazni. The British administration had been unsuccessful in appointing a governor in Ghazni, and hoped the Hazaras could disperse the anti-British coalition that was gathering in the city around the late amir's son, Musa Jan.[363] At the same time, a Hazara chief, Naib Nur Muhammad Khan, was sent to Turkestan to further British influence in Kataghan, north of Bamian, where the local governor was resisting British influence and was threatening

[357] 'Nos. 120-133', sec. 122.
[358] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 29, 55.
[359] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*; Dalrymple, *Return of a King*.
[360] 'Nos. 120-133', sec. 122; 'Mss Eur F426/16, Papers Relating to Hazaras Including Memoranda by Euan-Smith on Disturbances between Afghans and Hazaras, and Claims by Latter for Compensation for Losses Sustained from Afghans, and on Enlistment of Hazaras for Military Duty in India or on the Front', September 1880, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.
[361] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[362] 'Nos. 120-133', sec. 123.
[363] Ibid., secs 124–126.

to attack Kabul.[364] During the war British authorities started to position these communities as privileged partners of a British-run state. However, when the government of India retired its troops in August 1880 the position of the Shia communities worsened. The Hazaras in particular were systematically marginalised during Abdur Rahman's administration (1881-1900). Historians have often attributed their changing position *vis-à-vis* the Afghan state to the amir's sectarian policies.[365] However, as chapter five will point out, the government of Kabul's policies were mainly informed by political considerations, which took into account the ties that the colonial state continued to maintain with the Hazaras until the end of the century through military recruitment and intelligence networks.

Shifting to (in)direct rule: the fiction of native government in Kabul

The direct management of Kabul, where Roberts acted as the main architect of a quasi-colonial system of rule, progressively gave way to a more indirect type of government. In December 1879 an insurgency of adherents of the former amir Shere Ali Khan and his son Musa Jan, who was proclaimed new amir, severely threatened the British occupation of Kabul from their stronghold in Ghazni, where the British had unsuccessfully been trying to appoint a new governor.[366] For most of the month, Roberts and his troops were entrenched in the military cantonments of Sherpur, just outside of Kabul, and only in early January 1880 were the British able to regain the city.[367] In the same weeks, the insurgents also attacked the British-appointed governors in the provinces of Jellalabad, Khost and Kurram, where British political officers continued to maintain a strong role in native-run administrations.[368] At the beginning of 1880, and likely in consideration of the weakened position of the British occupation, Roberts decided to devolve increasing powers to Muhammad Khan and appointed him as Wali or governor.[369] In January a committee composed of Roberts, Major Hastings, Nawab Ghulam Hassan, Hyat Khan, the Mustaufi or finance minister of the previous administration, and Sirdar Wali Muhammad Khan delineated a

[364] 'Nos. 301-359', sec. 348.
[365] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 158.
[366] *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80. Abridged Official Account*, 150.
[367] Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 161–78.
[368] Ibid., 147.
[369] 'Nos. 518-535, Administration of Kabul and Other Provinces. Proclamations, Etc.', January 1880, sec. K.W., Foreign Department, SS, NAI.

proposal for the future government of northern Afghanistan.[370] Their proposal envisioned the appointment of Wali Muhammad Khan, assisted by the Mustaufi and a small group of Sirdars, to carry out the 'general administration' of the Kabul province. The plan also entailed the appointment of new governors in the districts of Jellalabad, Kunar, Lughman, Kohistan, Lorar, Zurmat and Ghazni, where in the previous months Roberts had already introduced new figures.[371] As regards the administration of the revenue system, the commission suggested that 'the management of taxes in Kabul city to be transferred from General Hills to Wali Muhammad, who will directly manage Kabul district proper, extending from Butkhak on east to Maidan on west, and from Charasiab on south to Deh Sabz on north'.[372] Wali Muhammad Khan thus became the key figure in Roberts' plans for the 'future administration of the Kabul province'.[373] The new arrangements started a period of diarchy or double government between the British and the Wali.

The devolution of powers to the Wali did not lead to a clear form of native government in the city. The boundaries between British functions and native authority were never clearly laid out but were kept undefined. Although Roberts planned to transfer the 'entire management' of 'the city and Kabul district proper' to the Wali, Roberts continued to retain ultimate decision-making powers.[374] In January 1880 martial law was lifted in Kabul and the military governorship of General Hills was abolished in order to ease the transition to native rule in the city. In a proclamation to the population of the city, Roberts said that 'in order that the people of Kabul may be governed as far as possible in accordance with their own customs and traditions, it has been determined that the charge of the administration should be entrusted to an Afghan noble'.[375] The new governor was entrusted with the administration of justice and the policing of the city, which had so far been under the control of the Commission of Enquiry. The districts were to be administered by Kabul, as 'all orders to Governors [should] be issued through Wali Muhammad', while the governors were 'allowed a small armed force of both horse and infantry soldiers'.[376]

[370] 'Nos. 364-376A, Enquiry into the Outbreak at Kabul, and the Future Policy in Afghanistan', February 1880, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[371] 'Nos. 518-535', sec. 521.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid., sec. 520.
[374] 'Nos. 518-535'.
[375] 'Nos. 301-359', sec. 332; 'Nos. 518-535', sec. 533.
[376] 'Nos. 518-535', 521.

At the same time, the new governor was expected to act in all ways 'subject to orders' coming from Roberts directly. British authorities retained control over the new district governors, who were to receive orders from Roberts through the Wali.[377] Roberts retained the power to appoint new governors in the surrounding districts, notably in Jellalabad, Kunar, Lughman, Logar and Omarkh.[378] After the December insurgency organised by the anti-British faction gathered in Ghazni, the Wali was employed to reach out to the districts around Kabul and try to regain the loyalty of the local headmen in order to prevent further attacks on the British forces.[379] British authorities retained control over land revenue of the province of Kabul, creating a diarchy of powers difficult to untangle, as Roberts himself admitted.[380] In the end, as the general declared, the Wali was to 'administer the city and district of Kabul on behalf of the British Government, subject to my general supervision and control'.[381] Thus, the government that emerged from the devolution of powers to Wali Muhammad Khan was a 'civil administration' formally run by a native appointee but *de facto* managed by the British.[382] The new arrangement attempted to bring the government of northern Afghanistan in line with colonial ideas of native governance, in which a local personality, allegedly agreeable to the population, was to rule autonomously albeit under British supervision. Thus, British authorities tried to bring Kabul's government closer to the the residency model. However, the deep entanglement they had built with local politics made a reversal of their dominant role impossible. What they ended up with was a modification of the experiment in direct rule Roberts had carried out since his arrival in the city, in which residency elements were woven into a form of *de facto* British administration.

In northern Afghanistan, the experimentation with forms of indirect rule started with the appointment of a British resident at the court of the Amir. When this first attempt failed, a military occupation of the city brought a more direct form of government that sought to establish British control and administration over the city while upholding the sovereignty of the amir. Roberts' initial strategy mimicked early British annexation of territory in India, when East India Company authorities

[377] Ibid., sec. 521.
[378] Ibid., secs 521, 527.
[379] 'Nos. 301-359', sec. 306.
[380] 'Nos. 518-535'.
[381] 'Nos. 301-359', sec. 332; 'Nos. 518-535', sec. 533.
[382] 'Nos. 301-359', sec. 332; 'Nos. 518-535', sec. 533.

continued to pay formal allegiance to the Mughal emperor despite assuming direct administration of land. In Afghanistan, the abdication of Yakub Khan radically changed British prospects and triggered the progressive establishment of quasi-colonial institutions through which Roberts and the government were portrayed as Kabul's new sovereign entities. This point is further demonstrated by the acknowledgement of many provincial governors and tribal headmen of Britain's status. Ultimately, Roberts tried to apply to Afghanistan a modified form of the residency model, which devolved formal powers to a native ruler, while retaining real powers in the hands of the British. However, throughout these experiments British authorities faced mounting contestation, which contributed to their decision to end the occupation.

The incorporation of the polity centred around Kabul into the system of Indian feudatory states ultimately failed. Despite the return to formal native rule, opposition from Ghazni and its adherents in the districts surrounding Kabul continued throughout 1880 and British authorities were unsuccessful at effectively extending any control beyond the Kabul province and its surrounding districts.[383] The arrangements Roberts and the Wali had devised for the administration of Kabul and other provinces, including the appointment of new governors and the devolution of security and policing to the tribes, failed. At the same time, Herat, Turkestan, Badakhshan continued to act as *de facto* independent polities.[384] Ghazni was similarly out of British reach. It became the main political hub for an anti-British political movement that campaigned for the re-instalment of Shere Ali Khan's dynasty, in the figure of his son Musa Jan, often through armed opposition. As was the case for Kandahar, the political elections in Britain in April 1880 fundamentally changed the government's strategy, returning it to a more non-interventionist one. The retention of Kabul as British India's feudatory was deemed unnecessary and excessively expensive. Therefore, in the spring of 1880 negotiations with Abdur Rahman Khan started and led to his appointment as 'amir of Kabul'.[385]

British administration of Kandahar: inscribing Durrani ethnicity in state administration

[383] 'Nos. 301-359', secs 301–316, 328.
[384] Ibid., sec. 338.
[385] 'IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO3'.

The British military occupation and administration of southern Afghanistan replicated some of the dynamics implemented in Kabul but was different in that it worked more with existing bureaucratic structures. When the Indian Army occupied the city of Kandahar in January 1879, general D.M. Stewart, the commanding general, and major O. St. John, the political officer, established a form of direct rule over the province's crumbling administration which lasted until the summer of the same year.[386] During this period, the city continued to be garrisoned by regiments of the Indian army, which were involved in revenue collection and in the maintenance of law and order. We do not have detailed information about the exact form of this military occupation but we can assume that the 'direct occupation' the British military and political officials referred to was a form of government in which they maintained a significant amount of intervention in the administration of the city. After the signing of the treaty of Gandamak in May 1879 and the establishment of a resident in Kabul, a physical British presence no longer seemed necessary for the furthering of British India's objective of turning southern Afghanistan into a separate state. Therefore, in June 1879 the government of India began to withdraw its troops from southern Afghanistan and prepared to hand over the administration to a governor appointed by the amir, Sirdar Shere Ali Khan, son of Mehrdil Khan, cousin of the late amir Shere Ali Khan and one of the Kandahar Sirdars who had ruled the city in the 1830s.[387] The political project envisioned for the Kandahar polity was temporarily brought to an end by the death of the resident, which triggered the immediate British re-occupation of the city. While British officials resumed charge of the administration of the province, they now more closely engaged in the experimentation with forms of indirect rule. Throughout the autumn of 1879 British rule in Kandahar took the shape of government through intermediation, in which the Sirdar became the key element in maintaining British influence over this polity and extending it over other districts. In the months that followed the abdication of Yakub Khan in October 1879, and until the summer of 1880, British authorities co-administered the city together with the local governor, a cooperation in which respective roles and powers were often not clearly defined.

[386] 'Nos. 301-305, Journal of Southern Afghanistan Field Force from 22nd to 31st July 1879', August 1879, sec. 302, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[387] Foreign Office, India, *Biographical Accounts*, 188; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 11.

During the first phase of the occupation, from January to June-August 1879, British officials established a form of direct administration over the Kandahar province that tried to maintain its connection with the government of Kabul through the figure of the British resident. Historical detail on this period is not very rich but it nonetheless points to a dominant role played by the British military and political officials in the administration of the city.[388] Until Yakub Khan's abdication in October 1879, British officials in Kandahar continued to refer, at least formally, to the amir with regard to the settlement of the province. Yakub Khan was still upheld as the legitimate and sovereign ruler of Afghanistan, both of Kabul and Kandahar. However, while links continued to be maintained between the government of Kabul and the administration of Kandahar, they started to be managed by the British resident at the amir's court and military personnel in Kandahar. At the same time, British authorities interlaced relations with the existing local political establishment, through which they engaged in the direct collection of revenue in the province of Kandahar.[389] This period of direct rule was seen by British authorities, and by many local Afghan officials, as a period in which rule by the amir of Kabul, whose authority was crumbling, was being substituted by a British administration. In fact, when the British authorities in charge of Kandahar, St. John and Stewart, eventually proceeded to transfer the government to a local governor in the summer of 1879, this process was presented in terms of the province of Kandahar being 'replaced under Kabul authority'.[390] While the *façade* of the amir's sovereignty was formally maintained during these months, the actual government of the province was *de facto* in the hands of the British officials. As has been argued for northern Afghanistan, what was seen as a temporary British administration of the amir's territory, although ambiguous in many ways, deeply entangled British authorities into the local political landscape.

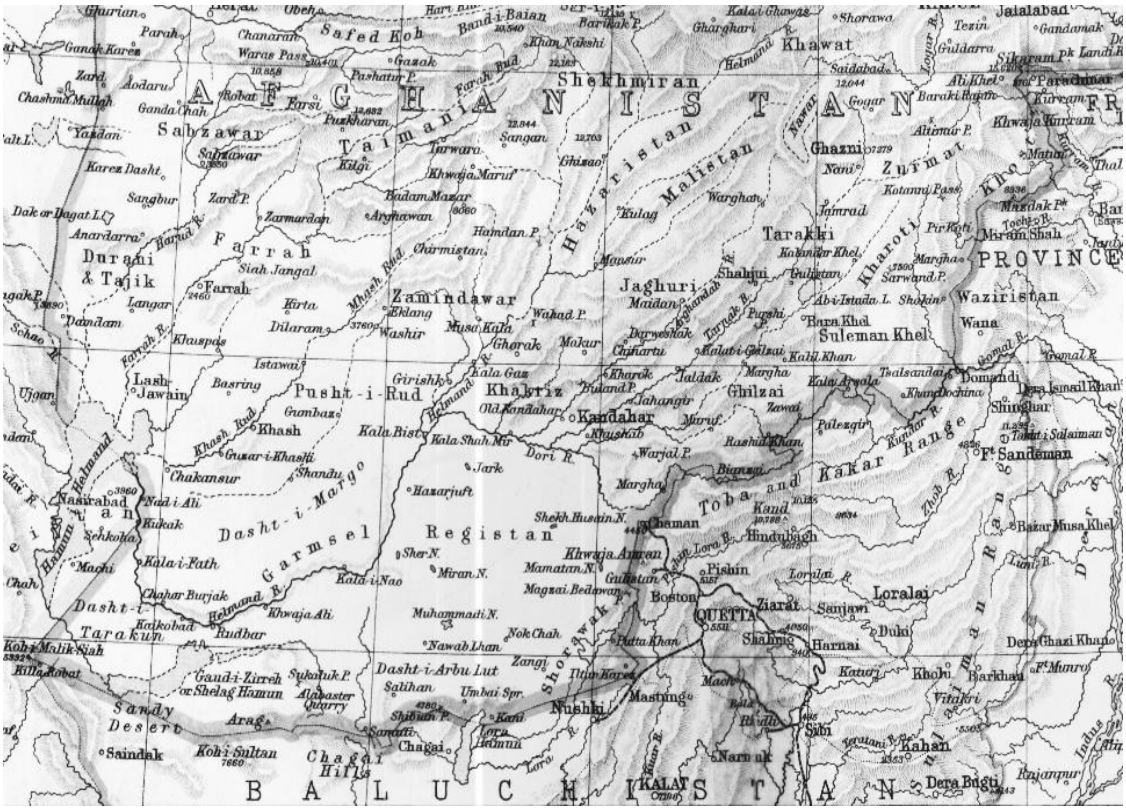
The incongruity of British India's idea of shared authority in southern Afghanistan was highlighted during the British withdrawal, when they started to transfer the administration to Sirdar Shere Ali Khan. The debate between the government of India, British authorities in Kandahar and the resident in Kabul emphasised the intention to maintain a concrete foothold in southern Afghanistan

[388] 'Nos. 301-305'.
[389] 'Nos. 86-105, Arrangement for the Restoration of Kandahar to the Afghan Government', June 1879, sec. 105, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[390] Ibid., sec. K.W.

despite claims of non-interference. The arrangement coming out of this process of transition should, in the words of Lyall, be based on 'concerted measures' between the Afghan governor Sirdar Shere Ali Khan and the British authorities, thus retaining for the latter a decisive say in the process.[391] In the summer of 1879, the government of India pressured Stewart and St. John for the speedy 'transfer of charge of all territory to be restored under [the] Treaty' of Gandamak.[392] At the same time, it also directed that the transfer should be superintended, in its 'proceedings and consequences', by these officials.[393] Stewart notably pointed out that one major concern was that the tribes and provincial governors that had entertained relations of service and collaboration with the British forces may not be willing to submit to the new amir's government.[394] In this sense the British intervened and instructed the governor of Kelat-i-Ghilzai, a district north-east of Kandahar, to submit to the amir's troops sent in that province to take over charge of the administration.[395] Therefore, the process of transfer thus envisioned, combined the appointment of an Afghan governor, who was to be given formal charge of the city's government, with relevant degrees of jurisdiction retained by the occupying forces. This arrangement anticipated plans for a permanent British supervision of Kandahar's administration and the restriction of the independent authority exercised by both the amir and the local governor.

British authorities in Kandahar constantly juggled between non-interference and an active role in local politics. The transfer of power in the autumn of 1879 disguised an uneasy cohabitation between the Afghan governor and the British authorities, who shared, but also constantly negotiated, blurred and reclaimed their respective spheres of authority, legitimacy and sovereignty. Sirdar Shere Ali Khan, as a case involving the governor of the district of Kelat-i-Ghilzai showed, acquired significant powers in the administration of the surrounding provinces and unilaterally dismissed provincial governors from their appointments.[396] At the same time however, the Sirdar himself referred to the British authorities in the settlement of

[391] Ibid.
[392] Ibid., sec. K.W., 103.
[393] Ibid.
[394] Ibid., sec. 104.
[395] Ibid.
[396] 'Nos. 337-392', sec. 382.



Map of southern Afghanistan[397]

disputes in the surrounding areas. When the Sirdar invited a number of the 'principal Khans of Zamindawar' to come to Kandahar to discuss an episode of alleged excessive taxation with general Stewart, the British authorities specified that they 'had nothing to do with the civil administration of Zamindawur'.[398] At the same time however, they proceeded to make enquiries into the alleged mismanagement of Muhammad Yusuf Khan, the governor of that province, who would later be dismissed from his office by Stewart himself.[399]

A similar case took place in Pusht-i-Rud where a number of Chiefs referred to general Stewart for the redress of excessive taxation allegedly demanded by the local governor. The general told the Chiefs that 'he did not wish to interfere in the affairs' of that province, 'but [that] he was desirous of ascertaining whether […] revenue in excess of the authorised amount was being exacted, in which case he

[397] Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*.
[398] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 185.
[399] Ibid.

[advised] the [local] Governor on the subject'.[400] In the setting that followed the occupation of Kabul and the progressive dismantling of the amir's authority, eventually leading to his abdication, the British in Kandahar continuously negotiated their role as the *de facto* rulers of southern Afghanistan. At the same time, notions of indirect rule – which were likely influenced by British experiments around the empire – led them to devolve increasing amounts of authority to the Sirdar. Shere Ali became the key intermediary in the attempted creation of a Kandahar-centred polity in southern Afghanistan that was a subsidiary to British India. In this process, British officials also crucially intervened in the relations between the Sirdar and the provincial governors, and in their interaction with the amir.

On the ground, the ambiguity of this division of powers between British authorities and the governor translated into concrete steps to retain control over some key territories around Kandahar. General Stewart planned to keep the 'city and home district' of *kariajat* and *daman*, in close proximity to the city, under British India's 'immediate control' for an indefinite period of time.[401] The Sirdar was to be given charge only of the 'administration of the outlying districts' or *mahallat*.[402] Stewart also raised the question of 'the extent of jurisdiction' to be maintained 'over the country in the vicinity of the line of communication with Pishin'.[403] Along the roads connecting Quetta and Chaman with Kandahar the British authorities had negotiated arrangements with the local Achakzai tribe. Their 'principal chief' received 'pay for himself and a certain number of sowars, and acted as assistant to Major Clifford, who has charge of the communications with Pishin'.[404] The tribes were used to police the area and in fact a 'small body of native levies' from the Achakzais had substituted the Indian Army's military posts on the road.[405] Similarly to the logic behind the retention of some form of control over the city, along the line of communication Stewart suggested that 'should the resumption by the Afghan Government of the control of this district of Kadanai be likely to interfere in any way with these arrangements now working so satisfactorily, it might be better to postpone it till our final departure from the country'. He also added that 'it would, under any circumstance, be necessary to

[400] Ibid., sec. 187.
[401] 'Nos. 86-105', sec. 97; 'Nos. 301-305', sec. 302.
[402] 'Nos. 301-305', sec. 302; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 269–70.
[403] 'Nos. 86-105', sec. 97.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.

retain our right to punish offenders on the line of communication'.[406] Thus, while the treaty of Gandamak and the presence of Cavagnari had finally created the conditions for the establishment of an indirect hold over Afghanistan, officials in the southern part of Afghanistan had planned for additional measures of permanent interference.

As in the case of Kabul, in Kandahar the news of the death of the British resident in early September 1879 transformed the role of British authorities. In the months that followed the death of Cavagnari, British authorities in southern Afghanistan increasingly challenged the authority of the amir, whose leverage on the south had been deteriorating since the British occupation of Kandahar, while deepening their cooperation with Sirdar Shere Ali Khan. In September and October 1879 the British representatives asserted their role as the *de facto* regent of southern Afghanistan, increasing the devolution of powers to Sirdar Shere Ali Khan that aimed at furthering Kandahar's separation from the rest of the Afghan polity and forging it into a separate state. While in Kabul the amir was under British suspicion for his alleged involvement in Cavagnari's death, in Kandahar the ties between British authorities and local leaderships were strengthened and the role of the amir progressively excluded from them. In Zamindawar, for example, Shere Ali Khan acted as guarantor for the revenue payments due by the struggling Muhammad Eusuf Khan, the local governor, to Kabul. Stewart instructed the Sirdar to permanently redirect the payment of Zamindawar's revenue to Kandahar instead of Kabul, thus curtailing the province's fiscal links with the amir's government.[407] The system of rule devised for southern Afghanistan aimed at positioning the British authorities as the new sovereign power. They redirected political networks to Kandahar, further undermining Kabul's hold. At the same time, they exercised their claims for sovereignty through the intercession of Sirdar Shere Ali Khan who cooperated in upholding the British-led administration.

Despite the increasing formalisation of the Sirdar's position as governor of southern Afghanistan, his relation with the British authorities replicated the uncertain boundaries between British and local sovereignty that characterised Roberts' collaboration with Sirdar Muhammad Khan in the administration of Kabul. Officials considered the implications of the devolution of powers to a native governor. The

[406] Ibid.
[407] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 187.

debate revolved around the subdivision of authority and the degree of subordination expected from the Sirdar. St. John notably pointed out the role the Sirdar should have with regard to the expenditure of public money. He argued that: 'in accordance with instructions from General Sir D. Stewart [the Sirdar] must look upon the Government of India as standing towards him in the same position as did the Amir, and he must be prepared to account for the revenue of the province to us as to him'.[408] The Sirdar however pointed out that he would not engage in public expenditure without the approval of the British authorities. Significantly, upon this statement the officer replied that this was not what the new administration of the city was aiming at, since 'at present full power and details were left to him'.[409]

At the same time, British force actively supported the office of the Sirdar, directing and actively promoting the extension of the governor's authority over the provinces surrounding Kandahar. British political agents reached out to the provinces with the support of the Indian Army sepoys stationed in Kandahar, in order to enforce the collection of revenue on behalf of the Sirdar in areas where it had been slow because of the crumbling of central authority following the occupation of Kabul and the amir's abdication. St. John was notably sent to Kelat-i-Ghilzai to make arrangements for the 'collection of revenue and supply of garrison', while Captain Molloy was appointed as permanent political agent in that province.[410] Similar to Roberts' settlement at Kabul, in Kandahar the formalization of the native authority invested with the government of the province did not end its accountability to British authorities. Sirdar Shere Ali had to acknowledge the sovereignty of the British in some key areas such as revenue, over which Stewart and St. John continued to exercise ultimate authority.[411] In both Kandahar and Kabul British authorities aimed at the introduction of a 'system of Government' comparable to the one found in India, as St. John put it. In this logic, the Sirdar had been retained in his position as governor.[412]

Final arrangements for the native administration of Kandahar were based on the understanding of this province as a historically separate political unity holding an identity different from the rest of Afghanistan. The rivalry British authorities thought

[408] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 271.
[409] Ibid.
[410] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 177.
[411] Ibid., 185.
[412] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 271.

divided Kandahar from Kabul laid in the antagonism between the Durranis and Ghilzais, the two biggest tribes in Afghanistan and their ramifications in different sub-tribes and clans.[413] British colonial scholars, such as Raverty, Bellew and Caroe argued for a marked racial difference between the Ghilzais and Durranis. The former were thought to be of Turkic origin, with some arguments going as far as identifying them with an ancient Christian tribe, and perceived as superior to the Durranis.[414] Besides, the political history of Kandahar also pointed to a certain antagonism. Gregorian states that the two tribes had fought each other for supremacy since the early eighteenth century.[415] In practice, when deciding his appointment, British officials stressed Shere Ali Khan's family descent and standing among the different factions that formed Kandahar's political landscape. Similar to how Kabuli politics were conceived, in Kandahar British authorities reasoned along the lines of Barakzai factionalism, which formed a sub-tribe of the Durrani group, and stressed the corrupt and unlawful rule Shere Ali Khan and Yakub Khan had exercised over southern Afghanistan. Major M. Protheroe, extra assistant political officer in Kandahar, pointed out that the general opinion was that 'no dependence was to be placed in the word of any of the family of Dost Muhammad'.[416] In this climate of heightened factionalism, British authorities presented themselves as the new force capable of rectifying Barakzai misgovernment and reinstating the province's ancient rulers in their place.

At the end of October 1879 Stewart announced in *durbar* that 'the Barakzais would not again be allowed to molest those who had made their submission' to the British authorities.[417] He pointed out that 'the misgovernment and over-taxation of the last twelve years have made Barakzai rule, especially that of the late Amir's family, intensely unpopular in Kandahar'.[418] For him, a return to the 'old state of things, in which the Government of Kandahar was practically divided among four men, all aliens' and 'ruled like a conquered province' should be avoided.[419] Stewart referred to

[413] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 30–31.
[414] Bellew, *Afghanistan and the Afghans*; H.W. Bellew, *The Races Of Afghanistan. Being a Brief Account of the Principal Nations Inhabiting That Country* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink And Co., 1880); Caroe, *The Pathans 550 B.C.—A.D. I957*; Henry George Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan and Part of Baluchistan: Geographical, Ethnographical ...* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1880); Cited in Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 31.
[415] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 31.
[416] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 187.
[417] 'Nos. 488-533', sec. 510.
[418] 'Nos. 86-105', sec. 97.
[419] This refers to the rule of the Muhammedzai Sardars, half-brothers of amir Dost Muhammad Khan, who ruled the province with different degrees of autonomy from Kabul between 1818 and the late

the shift in power at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Sadozai rule in Kandahar was upset by the establishment of the government of the so-called Dil brothers: Sardars Purdil Khan, Sherdil Khan and Kuhandil Khan.[420] These were Muhammadzai nobles and half-brothers of Dost Muhammad Khan. They ruled the province until its annexation by amir Dost Muhammad Khan in 1855.[421] MacGregor, quoted also in the 1908 Gazetteer of Afghanistan, points out that in 1843 Kuhandil Khan took possession of the city after the British withdrawal and 'commenced a reign of gross tyranny and spoliation, which reduced the inhabitants of Kandahar to the last ebb of despair'.[422] Noelle-Karimi points out that until the late 1810s, Durrani sardars played a crucial role in the administration of the province, where they had acted as provincial governors and military commanders.[423] During Dost Muhammad Khan's reign their role in the state administration was curtailed and only few prominent Durrani families continued to hold important government positions, while the amir increasingly concentrated power in the hands of his immediate Muhammadzai family.[424] Thus British officials made a case for Kandahari exceptionalism: the history of its ruling class, tied to the land from which it had been evicted by the rulers of Kabul, justified separate administrative arrangements that were allegedly rooted in antique custom. As in the case of the 'invented traditions' theorised by Hobsbawm and Ranger, history was used by British officials to justify the reform of Kandahar's administration and create 'group cohesion' among the Durranis, drawing on their alleged antagonism to the Ghilzais of northern Afghanistan, whose 'supremacy' they had historically resisted.[425]

Considerations around Kandahari difference were combined with ideas of the province as homeland of the Durranis, the 'only true Afghans' according to many officials in government service.[426] Kandahar province was described by British

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1840s. Their authority extended to Kandahar's frontier with Herat, Zamindawar, Hazara territories north of the city, Sibi, Sind, Khelat in the South. The revenue of these territories was retained by the Kandahar sirdars. Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 235–37; 'Nos. 86-105', sec. 97; 'No. 556', sec. 22.

[420] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 11, 235.

[421] *Gazetteer of Afghanistan Compiled in the Division of the Chief of Staff/General Staff India Calcutta/Simla: Govt of India, Kandahar: Maps and Plans Secret*, 1908, 157.

[422] MacGregor, *Central Asia Calcutta*, Pt. II:518; *Gazetteer of Afghanistan Compiled in the Division of the Chief of Staff/General Staff India Calcutta/Simla*, 1908, 156.

[423] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 251.

[424] Ibid., 252.

[425] 'No. 556', sec. 22; Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 12.

[426] 'Nos. 348-355A', sec. 350.

officials in terms of a 'Durani nation', stressing that the majority of the population belonged to this group.[427] When the Sirdar, despite being himself a Muhammedzai noble, thus part of this Durrani Barakzai clan, was appointed, St. John announced to a 'full assembly of notables including Mullahs and merchants' that 'in consideration of the general peaceable conduct of Duranis of Kandahar' the Sirdar had been appointed governor.[428] British authorities viewed this group as a 'powerful semi-feudal aristocracy' organised in tribes which had historically considerable privileges.[429] Stewart further argued that 'power should be placed in the hands of a single man, a native of the province, strong and popular' and if the government thought it better to 'place a member of the ruling house over Kandahar, Sirdar Shere Ali Khan, Kandahari, would probably be the best man'.[430] He urged the population to work with the governor and show confidence in 'the appointment of their fellow townsman and representative of their old rulers'.[431] Ultimately, British authorities chose continuity with the ruling family of amirs: the Sirdar was considered a fitting choice for the position because of his descent from Payindah Khan Muhammedzai, Dost Muhammad Khan's father and chief minister during Shah Zaman's reign (1793-1800).[432] The arrangements made in the spring of 1880 drew on the idea that the hereditary rule of the dynasty going back to Payindah Khan had been restored to southern Afghanistan, after having been disrupted by the unlawful *interregnum* of amir Shere Ali Khan and his son Yakub Khan. Thus the arrangements devised for the permanent settlement of the province drew on the intersection of ideas of traditional rulership, antiquity, race, ethnicity. British India envisioned a set-up for the province that reinforced the position of the Durranis as a group, who, as privileged partners of the empire, would uphold the permanent separation of Kandahar from Kabul. In the aftermath of the British withdrawal from Kandahar, Afghanistan was fractured along these lines. Southern Afghanistan was occupied by Sardar Ayub Khan, who had defeated the British troops in Maiwand July 1880 and managed to gather around him the support of the Durranis. When, in April 1881, Abdur Rahman defeated Ayub

[427] Ibid., 350, 352.
[428] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 179; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 30.
[429] 'No. 556', sec. 22.
[430] 'Nos. 86-105', sec. 97.
[431] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 179.
[432] 'Nos. 348-355A', sec. 352; Christine Noelle points out that Payinda Khan opposed Shah Zaman's efforts to 'weaken the influential Durrani leaders by taking away their hereditary government posts'. He aimed at securing for the Durrani leadership 'equal standing with the kings'. Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 2–8.

Khan and annexed Kandahar, largely thanks to British money and military equipment, he built on the support of the Ghilzais. During the occupation, British authorities drew on the history of the relation between Durranis and Ghilzais to strengthen the political division between Kabul and Kandahar into two separates states. St. John saw the amir's military operations in southern Afghanistan as a war between 'hereditary foes', which reinstated the 'ancestral animosity' between these two groups.[433] While, as Kakar has shown, there were many nuances in the ethnic and tribal composition of the two factions, a certain degree of connection can be identified between the policy adopted by the British authorities and the forces and allegiances Abdur Rahman and Ayub Kahn drew on in the aftermath of the war.[434]

The attempted demarcation of the border between the former provinces of Kabul and Kandahar that followed the plans for the reshaping of Afghanistan into separate states epitomised the use of colonial sociological knowledge in the formulation of British policies towards Afghanistan. In this case, the attempt to determine the two states' respective jurisdiction relied on the above mentioned considerations around the peculiar character of Kandahar, as well as on colonial understanding of the area's tribal geography. In fact, the geographical shape the two polities ought to take was directly determined by knowledge colonial officials had gained of tribal ethnology, their distribution over the area, their internal divisions and interconnections. A reconnaissance made by Major Euan-Smith, political officers with the Ghazni Field Force in the spring of 1880, produced a map of the suggested boundary. The officer argued that:

> These limits have their basis on the principle of tribal division, and can thus be easily demarcated, the extent of the territory held by each tribe being perfectly well known. This assignment, moreover, being made according to ancient custom would have nothing novel in it to give rise to incertitude or dispute.[435]

Euan-Smith made the case that the limits of the 'Kandahar State' ought to be those 'hitherto claimed by that State and acknowledged and accepted by the tribes concerned'.[436] In his final report, the officer presented a picture of the tribes' locations in geographically accurate terms: Hotaks, Tarakis, Andars, Ali Khels, Suliman Khels,

[433] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 59.
[434] Ibid.
[435] 'Nos. 331-332, Boundary between Kabul and Kandahar', July 1880, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[436] Ibid.

Hazaras were imagined as a succession of systematically determined 'possessions' that extended from Kandahar to Ghazni in the north.[437] Historians have shown that colonial writing conceptualised Afghan tribes as discrete and geographically bounded entities, but they have not discussed how these ideas were employed in practice beyond the Indo-Afghan frontier.[438] In the delimitation of the border, considerations around Afghan tribes intersected with the perceived need to re-establish Kandahar's ancient rights of government over these populations.

As Sana Haroon has argued, during the second half of the nineteenth century colonial ethnography developed a specific understanding of the tribes along British India's north-western border. Colonial accounts of the Pathans understood these groups as 'small, homogeneous' communities who 'settled as kinship groups that orally recorded their descent from a Pakhtun forefather'. While tribe was being forged into the main 'format for the organisation of statistical data on the communities of the north-west highlands', the case of Kandahar shows that similar understandings were at play in mainland Afghanistan.[439] The inquiry into the tribes' history of settlement, use of land and revenue relations with local and state authorities were at the basis for determining the tribes' connections either with Kabul or Kandahar, evidence of which was traced back in history. Significantly, similar considerations shaped the demarcation of Afghanistan's north-western boundary between 1884 and 1887, as will be seen in chapter three. In both instances, colonial sociological understanding led authorities to push for maintaining the geographical unity of tribal groups, which in many cases redefined their settlement patterns and relations with the Afghan state authorities, something that historians have pointed out in relation to the North-West Frontier but not Afghanistan itself.[440]

In the re-organisation of the administration of Kandahar and its expansion to the outlying districts Sirdar Shere Ali Khan played a crucial role. From October to November 1879 the collaboration between the Sirdar and the British authorities had led to the incorporation of various districts into the Kandahar province. Crucially, the

[437] Ibid.
[438] Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 5–38; Benjamin D. Hopkins, ed., *Beyond Swat: History, Society and Economy along the Afghanistan-Pakistan Frontier* (London: Hurst, 2013); Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*.
[439] Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 5–38.
[440] Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Routledge, 2013); Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*.

Sirdar had been asked by Stewart and St. John to take charge of a number of areas, in which he went on to appoint members of his own family in substitution to the local governors still tied to Shere Ali and Yakub Khan. The governors still in place in October 1879 were dismissed or had left their province in consequence of their inability to further command loyalty. Stewart pointed out that the district of Kelat-i-Ghilzai was 'placed under the Government of Kandahar, from which it was separated about twenty years ago, and Sirdar Shere Ali Khan has appointed his nephew, Sirdar Shirindil Khan, Lieutenant-Governor'. Similarly, Sirdar Muhammad Yusuf Khan, former Governor of Zaminadawar was sent to Kabul. In his stead, 'Abbas Khan, brother-in-law of Sirdar Shere Ali' was appointed and took his office accompanied by a delegation of Alizai Chiefs, who had been with the British authorities in Kandahar for some time and who were part of the new administrative arrangement for this area.[441]

From the beginning of the military occupation, British authorities had interacted directly with the tribes and made arrangements for the safety of roads and lines of communication. The consolidated practice of managing communities in Waziristan and Khelat through forms of collecting tribal governance, such as the *loya jirga*, was replicated in the enlarged province of Kandahar.[442] In practice, British officers advised provincial governors to refer their grievances and disputes to the governor, while receiving delegations of tribal heads from the surrounding provinces and entertaining them in durbars in the city. Thus, through their native nominee, British officers in Kandahar acted as the new centres of power, to which local political networks were expected to refer and declare their allegiance.

The often undefined division of authority among British authorities, local governors and the Sirdar raised questions about the way the British-led administration redefined hierarchies at the local level. Sirdar Muhammad Eusuf Khan, the governor of Pusht-i-Rud was notably concerned about the effects British encroachments in the provincial administration could have on his own positon *vis-à-vis* the local chiefs. He pointed out that 'the Chiefs who had come from Pusht-i-Rud were his inferiors and he trusted the General would not confront him with them in such a manner as to lower his dignity in their eyes […] at the same time he was ready to comply with any

[441] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 177.
[442] Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*.

suggestion made by the General'.[443] The concerted appointment of provincial governors by the British and the Sirdar redefined the logic of local political hierarchies. They raised questions around the hierarchies and precedence that characterised the political landscape of Southern Afghanistan and they generated controversies over the division of authority between the different layers of the administration British officials were interacting with. In the long term, these reforms were also contested. As the existing governors were replaced by Shere Ali's nominees, reports were coming from places such as Zamindawar and Farrah of attempts to draw the provincial governors into a rebellion against the British generated by local tribal headmen.[444]

The new appointments made at the provincial level played a key role in extending British paramountcy. However, they also triggered disputes with local headmen over the authority of the governors sent from Kandahar. These challenges often took the form of refusal to pay land revenue or petitions against alleged over taxation, not dissimilar from the dynamics that had characterised the position of amir Shere Ali's provincial governors. In the case of Shorawak, located in Pusht-i-Rud district, the Maliks notably 'declined to pay up their arrears and current year's revenue to Sirdar Gul Muhammad Khan', the newly appointed governor, and 'appealed to Captain Wylie at Quetta' for an exemption.[445] The political agent at Quetta argued with the maliks that the governor had been appointed with the 'knowledge and consent of Sir Donald Stewart'.[446] Interestingly, ultimate appeal for these local grievances was referred to the British authorities, who always moved to legitimate the appointments of the Sirdar. Around the mid-nineteenth century the collection of revenue in the Kandahar province, similarly to Kabul, was restricted to the lands immediately surrounding the city and along the main trade routes. Dost Muhammad only partially reformed the Sadozai system of jagirs by which the greater part of resources was distributed in the province and never sent to the state treasury. Noelle-Karimi points out that after Dost Muhammad's annexation of Kandahar in 1855, the revenue collection continued to be problematic in some of the regions

[443] 'Nos. 152-191', sec. 187.
[444] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 271.
[445] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[446] Ibid.

beyond the metropolitan area, such as Zamindawar, on the north-west of the city.[447] The system of jagirs also impinged on the form of the military forces, which were bound to a system of military recruitment that relied on tribes as the main unit of reference. Allowances and grants were given to tribal chiefs in exchange for the maintenance of military contingents.[448] Thus, the land revenue relations that had characterised the reigns of Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali had informed a certain type of relation between the amir and the provincial elites, which was shaped by the latter's contribution of troops – often resisted and refused – to the amir's regiments. The British authorities in charge of the administration of Kandahar started to reform this system.

British indirect government through the Sirdar affected some crucial areas of the administration and in many ways impinged on the structures set in place by the late amir Shere Ali Khan. The Sirdar applied to St. John for permission to 'engage *sowars* under the tribal chiefs to preserve order and collect revenue in the districts'.[449] General Stewart agreed to this proposal, arguing that this was the 'usual' practice of recruitment, which had the advantage of providing 'pay and employment'.[450] Noelle-Karimi points out that especially during Sadozai rule the army had been a highly decentralised institution. It relied mainly on tribal cavalry and local militias, thus giving a key role to 'tribal levies under the command of local leaders, which were only called out at time of war'.[451] The governor of Kandahar argued, and eventually convinced the British authorities of the need to replace the local Afghan army's cavalry regiments with tribal levies, a practice that had been partially discontinued by Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali Khan, and provide military equipment for the control and policing of the surrounding provinces. He maintained that for the garrisoning of Kandahar and Kelat-i-Ghilzai alone 'not less than six infantry regiments of about 600 men each' would be necessary and that the British government should provide equipment to arm these, as well as his own regiments. Furthermore, in the words of St. John, with whom these negotiations were conducted, the Sirdar pointed out that:

[447] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 274.
[448] Ibid., 262.
[449] 'IOR/L/PS/7/23'.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 259.

> Regular cavalry, such as the Amir Sher Ali had established, [were] entirely useless. It was vey unpopular and did not do the district work for which cavalry was mainly used, nearly as well as the ordinary tribal levies. Of these he believed 1,500 to be required. The Amir had reduced them from 7,000 to 700; he had already raised them to 1,100 for Kandahar alone. These had their own arms.[452]

Amir Shere Ali Khan had begun to reform army recruitment. He had attempted to curtail the role of the irregular tribal levies and institutionalised a tentative centralised army under the control of the government of Kabul. During the occupation of Kandahar, British authorities contributed to reversing this system. They authorised the governor Shere Ali Khan to start recruiting army men on a tribal basis, thus discontinuing state control over the military sector.[453] The British-appointed governor of Kandahar already retained a central role in the restructuring of the city's administration. Through the recruitment of tribesmen into the local military forces St. John and Stewart endeavoured to strengthen his position as ruler of southern Afghanistan. In this way, they further upheld the position of the Sirdar's Durrani networks, which were thus embedded both in the province's administration and military structures.

These reforms encroached not only on the level of provincial administration, as the substitution of governors has shown, but touched upon government at the local level, showing that the British occupation had indirect impact on the internal administration of the province. It is not possible to discern to what degree these reforms were part of the British political plans in southern Afghanistan, and to what degree they stemmed from the Sirdar's own agenda. However, the sources point to a certain convergence of interests and perhaps ideas between colonial understandings and practices and local interests.[454] Nonetheless, these reforms succeeded in reinforcing the position of the Sirdar and his immediate Durrani network. They increasingly empowered the Sirdar and his family, who became the main provider of political services to the occupation force. In a similar way, they were pulling the strings of tribal governance, trying to use the collaboration of the Sirdar to centre tribal allegiances around their presence in Kandahar.

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[452] 'Nos. 239-273', sec. 271.
[453] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 259.
[454] Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 5–31; Charles Lindholm, 'Images of the Pathan: The Usefulness of Colonial Ethnography', in *Frontier Perspectives* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

The system of land revenue collection that emerged out of the diarchy further reinforced the Durrani elements in charge of the Kandahar state. Until the death of Cavagnari and the re-occupation of the city the British had been in direct charge of the revenue, which underwent a process of centralisation similar to the one promoted by Roberts in Kabul. Native collectors were employed, who were directly responsible to the British government of Kandahar. The produce collected in the districts was brought into the city and sold by the British to recoup their costs of administration and their political expenditure.[455] However, from around October 1879 Stewart started to rely on the governors appointed by Shere Ali Khan, all members of his family, for the collection in the districts. This system differed from the one that had been previously in use during the reign of amir Shere Ali Khan in that it interlocked administrative structures with the local Durrani elites. During the reign of Dost Muhammad Khan, Durrani families, who had played a central role as provincial administrators during the Sadozai period, were increasingly marginalised from government service and substituted by Muhammadzai representatives.[456]

Under the government of the Amir Sher Ali Khan, revenue collection was entrusted to two officials responsible for the 'land revenue and minor taxes in the outdistricts' and the second for 'collecting the custom dues and taxes generally'. These were appointed directly by Kabul and were accountable to the Amir and not to the Kandahar governor.[457] As St. John described it, 'for many years past the Governor of Kandahar has had no control over, or even share in, the administration of finances'.[458] Under the Amir's rule, much of the revenue raised in the Kandahar province was sent to other localities – to Kabul and Herat in particular – in order to pay for the troops' salaries and other military expenses. According to St. John, this system caused 'much of the bitter feeling against the late Amir, which existed for many years past in Kandahar'.[459] The system introduced under the British occupation seems to have redirected the flow of revenue back to the city, instead of Kabul. Kandahar was now gaining a new role as administrative centre.

[455] 'Nos. 62-65, Revenue and Expenditure of the City and District of Kandahar', December 1879, sec. 62, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[456] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 252.
[457] 'Nos. 83-85, Revenue and Expenditure at Kandahar under the Afghan Government', June 1879, sec. 84, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Ibid.

By April 1880 the government of India had made plans for the permanent settlement of Southern Afghanistan into a separate state over which Sirdar Shere Ali Khan was to rule as 'independent' ruler, albeit with British 'support'.[460] The Sirdar, appointed with the title of Wali or governor, was to be 'allowed' a 'measure of authority […] as ample as possible' over his internal affairs. The 'limitations' placed concerned his foreign relations and military capacity.[461] To this end a British political agent or resident was to be appointed to the state, alongside a garrison, as the representative of the government of India. Stewart conceived this representative as 'Resident and Agent, and Governor-General in Southern Afghanistan'.[462] Furthermore, the state of Kandahar was to be connected to British India also through the construction of a telegraphic line and a railway from Quetta to the capital, a project that would be in the government's plan until the rest of the century.[463]

This infrastructure was also to increase the commercial exchanges with the Subcontinent, which would form a relevant part of the formal treaty binding the two polities.[464] While Stewart insisted that the Wali would be 'entirely free from control', the measures envisioned by the British officials in Kandahar and supported by the viceroy replicated the measures that had characterised the relationship established by the East India Company with the native polities it had taken control over.[465] The position of the Sirdar was similar to that of many Indian rulers. He balanced his independence over the state's internal affairs with British control over its links to the wider region – especially in terms of foreign relations and defence – which had been the cornerstone of the British government's interactions with subsidiary native polities across the empire.

The form of control the government of India sought to exercise over the Kandahar polity mimicked the early form of subsidiarity that had been implemented in early nineteenth century India. It envisioned a payment to be made by the Sirdar out of the state's revenues for the upkeep of the British garrisons stationed 'in his country or on its borders'.[466] What was fashioned in terms of a 'military subsidy' or

[460] 'Nos. 348-355A', sec. K.W. No. 1, 350.
[461] Ibid., sec. 350.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*.
[466] 'Nos. 348-355A', 350.

'tribute' by Lyall was *de facto* a subsidiary payment to the British government for the protection of the Kandahar state.[467] Stewart argued that the Wali's 'military force should be limited in numbers and at the disposal of the Government of India for the defence of Kandahar against external enemies'.[468] Similar to the Company's arrangement in Hyderabad or Awadh, in this case the British resident or governor would maintain control over the military force the government of India allowed the Wali to maintain, besides the presence of a garrison of Indian Army soldiers in his territories.[469] In fact, in Stewart's plans the British garrison should be stationed at some distance form the capital, Kandahar, and their position in relation to the ruler and his seat of power should be, he argued, '*mutatis mutandis* that of the garrison of Secunderabad in the Deccan'.[470] In this way, he expected to maintain the independence of the Wali *vis-à-vis* the local population, while replicating the subordinate relation these type of treaties had entailed in India. The relation the government wanted to establish with the Kandahar state went beyond the imposition of some form of external control but attempted to replicate the instruments of subsidiarity that had characterised the territorial expansion of the East India Company over the Indian native states. In this way, British authorities aimed to shape Kandahar into a 'Princely State', a term that Stewart used to describe the political set-up arranged by the government of India.[471]

Proxy state-building: expanding the limits of the empire through native mediation

The settlement of Southern Afghanistan under the Wali, as detailed by Stewart and Lyall, did not conceive the Kandahar state as a static entity but intended it as a proactive state-building force on the fringe of the British Indian empire. Stewart pointed out that because of the 'limited knowledge of the topography of these countries' it was 'impossible to define with sufficient accuracy the boundaries of the State formed by the aggregation of [the Southern] provinces and districts'.[472] 'The minimum boundaries' of the polity, he argued, included 'the province of Kandahar proper', 'the district of Kelat-i-Ghilzai, separated from Kandahar in 1855; the districts

[467] Ibid., K.W. No. 1, 2.
[468] Ibid., sec. 350.
[469] Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*; Nani Gopal Chaudhuri, *British Relations with Hyderabad, 1798-1843* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1964).
[470] 'Nos. 348-355A', sec. 350.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid.

of Pusht-i-Rud and Zamindawar, separated about nine years ago; and the district of Farah originally belonging to Herat, but which has formed a separate province since the capture of that city by the Amir of Kabul in 1863'.[473] Again, the argument of Kandahar's ancient rights and legitimate claims over the surrounding districts' revenue was heralded as the main justification for actively supporting the expansion of the Sirdar's authority.[474]

For the British, Kandahar's 'territorial boundaries' were 'practically fixed, although […] not yet defined'.[475] From his core constituency the Wali was expected to extend his authority in the directions prescribed by the British government, based only on vague geographical limits. In this process he received the active military and financial support. As Lyall argued, 'for the present the boundaries should remain as uncertain as possible; as the Sirdar Shere Ali can only establish his authority gradually in the districts which will be placed under him'.[476] What Stewart defined as a 'question of sovereignty' was intended to reshape the political geography of the wider region. The Kandahar state ought to extend its limits to include under the Wali's authority the territories of the Khan of Khelat; the Khan of Kharan, who had 'declared himself a subject of Afghanistan [and freed] himself from dependence on his two immediate neighbours, Persia and Kelat; and possibly extend further in the direction of Herat'.[477] In the creation of this super-princely state in southern Afghanistan, which was to encompass regions such as Khelat that were already under British control, the Wali was to act as a state-builder in his own right, filling the territory assigned to him by British India with his sovereignty and progressively extending its limits. As will be seen in chapter three, the same strategy of proxy state-building through local elites was used in 1884 by the British-led Afghan Boundary Commission in north-western Afghanistan. In this case local officers were similarly employed to engineer the extension of the amir's territories with the objective to boost the establishment of his sovereignty over them and further the reach of British imperial paramountcy.

In the government's vision the Kandahar state was to be an integral part of the British Indian empire, not a buffer state in protection of an alleged Russian

[473] Ibid.
[474] 'Nos. 331-332'; 'No. 556', sec. 22.
[475] 'Nos. 348-355A', sec. K. W. No. 2.
[476] Ibid., K.W. No. 2.
[477] Ibid., sec. 350.

territorial advance. In the instructions sent by Lord Lytton to the Wali, he was told that the scope of maintaining a British garrison in Kandahar was 'for the proper guardianship of the frontiers of Her Majesty's Empire'.[478] In 1880, similar to the debate that would characterise the demarcation of the Durand line in 1893, discussed in chapter four, the question of British India's imperial boundary was at the centre of the political arrangements. In the government's vision for Kandahar, the frontier of the empire coincided with the expanding frontier the Wali was expected to carve out of the un-demarcated territories assigned to him. Similarly, in Kabul, Roberts tried to push the boundaries of the Kabul state northwards into Turkestan through the use of native intermediaries appointed to the area, as pointed out above. Thus, British India's settlement of Kandahar as a subsidiary native state disclosed experiments of indirect state-building that anticipated considerations and strategies that would be at the centre of British India's relations with Afghanistan in the decades following the war and which fundamentally questioned where to draw the line of imperial inclusiveness.

Conclusion

The failure of the Lytton policy: The avatars of indirect rule in Afghanistan, 1880-90s

Following the plans for the transition to native rule in southern Afghanistan, in the summer of 1880 Shere Ali Khan was installed as Wali of Kandahar. Stewart and a significant part of the British troops left for Kabul to relieve Roberts who was due to return to India. In August Ayub Khan, Yakub Khan's brother and at that point independent ruler of Herat moved his troops to Kandahar in an attempt to capture the province.[479] There, in what is remembered as the battle of Maiwand, he defeated the troops under the authority of the Wali, as well as the few British garrisons left in the city. The defeat was followed by Ayub Khan's siege of the city of Kandahar that was only relieved by a military expedition sent from Kabul under the command of general Roberts, who proceeded to re-occupy the city temporarily. These events drastically changed the British position in southern Afghanistan and put an end to the experiment of indirect rule through Sirdar Shere Ali Khan, who had been unable to secure the loyalty of his troops during the fighting and had retreated to the British camp, leaving the city in a power vacuum and the government of India without a candidate for South Afghanistan's rulership.

[478] Ibid., sec. 352.
[479] Robson, *The Road to Kabul*, 223–24.

In April 1880 the election of a Liberal government in London under Gladstone and the replacement of Lytton as viceroy redefined British India's political project for Afghanistan.[480] The newly appointed secretary of state for India, the Marquis of Hartington, approached the Kandahar question from a very different point of view than Salisbury and Lytton, whose policy he considered a failed attempt.[481] The new government reversed the policy of 'subdivision or disintegration of the kingdom of Afghanistan' because this strategy was 'likely to entail the necessity of a permanent military occupation of Kandahar by a British force, a measure to which Her Majesty's Government would entertain the strongest objection'.[482] For the secretary of state the events that had led to the defeat of the combined Anglo-Afghan forces in Kandahar showed that the position of Shere Ali Khan was 'fatally weakened' and could never 'be re-established'.[483] The situation in the summer of 1880, he argued, pointed to the necessity of leaving the country, not of permanently settling it.[484] Crucially, it was the very position of the Sirdar as subsidiary ruler he had been continuously forged into that Hartington now considered problematic. He viewed the Sirdar as a mere 'nominee of the Indian Government', who in the present condition of affairs could never 'become anything more than a nominal ruler, absolutely dependent on the support of the British troops'.[485] In this way, the new government reversed the tenets that had allowed for the experimentation with the princely state model on this fringe of British India and it proceeded to definitely evacuate the city in August 1881.

The new line of policy determined a new approach to Afghanistan but did not deny the fundamental assumptions of the Lytton policy. On the one hand, Russia continued to be held as a variable in Afghan policy but, once again, a Russian advance into Afghanistan was not seen as a realistic possibility. The Gladstone government, as Disraeli had before him, argued that the only reason for extending British India's 'military frontier' was to counter Russia's territorial expansion in

[480] Chris Cook, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 49.
[481] 'No. 254, Secretary of State on Government of India's Action in Regard to Kandahar', December 1880, Foreign Department, SS, NAI.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Ibid.

Central Asia, which was however not seen as an immediate contingency.[486] On the other, the break-up of Afghanistan into separate polities had neutralised the potential threat posed by a united and strong polity on British India's north-western border. As Roberts explained it in May 1880:

> The Afghanistan of today is very different from the Afghanistan which existed at the time that the Treaty of Gandamak was made. Ruled by a strong Amir, possessed of a large standing army, and equipped with a numerous artillery and vast mutinous of war, Afghanistan was a power which it became absolute necessary for India to have access to and some control over. Kabul, the seat of government, had become a huge arsenal and barrack, and it was inexpedient that her ruler should be permitted to hold direct communication with Russia, receiving a Russian whilst declining a British Envoy, and neglecting all offers of friendly intercourse with India. Afghanistan is but a wreck of her former self, and, though no doubt still capable of strong combinations and powerful for mischief, she no longer exists as a military power, and has practically ceased to be a menace to India.[487]

The new policy course put an end to Lytton's expansionist policy. The secretary of state, citing the arguments that had been made by Lord Lawrence and other British officials against the urgency of countering the Russian advance, declined to commit to a 'policy of military extension'.[488] The government of India adopted a 'policy of complete withdrawal from Afghan territory, coupled with a steady abstinence from interference in their internal affairs'.[489] However, similar to Lytton's policy in the 1870s, seen in chapter one, in the 1880s proclamations of non-interference continued to imply an interventionist approach and often allowed for more subtle means of maintaining influence.

The attempt to transform Afghanistan into two separate native states centred around Kabul and Kandahar showed that British India's intervention into the country went beyond a mere military expedition, as the literature has shown so far. The government of India did not conceive the war as a means of halting a potential Russian advance, but as a way to hinder Afghanistan from developing into a native state with the potential to evade the system of princely states the government of India had been building in the subcontinent after the Indian mutiny. In the government of India's policy approach towards Afghanistan, the Great Game narrative of Anglo-Russian imperial competition did have a minor role, despite the literature's focus on

[486] Ibid.
[487] 'IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO3'.
[488] 'No. 254'.
[489] Ibid.

British geopolitical considerations. The second Afghan war should thus be viewed as an attempt at empire-building outside British India's administrative boundaries, rather than a defensive move to counter Russian territorial expansion towards Afghanistan.

As will be seen in chapters three and four, despite the return to a less interventionist policy the experiments in indirect rule that had been fostered during the Afghan war remained part of the officers' and the government's package of experience. They would be employed in subsequent encounters with Afghanistan, notably during the demarcation of the Maimena boundary (1884-1887) and the Durand line (1893-6). At the same time, since direct occupation had been excluded from British policy, boundary making became the main instrument for the assertion of imperial paramountcy over Afghanistan. These occasions showed that ideas of blurred sovereignty that had been an integral part of the considerations that informed British strategy in Afghanistan during the proxy state-building attempted in Kandahar and Turkistan, continued to be employed by British officials. The continuous attempts in the 1880s and 1890s to push British India's territory into Afghanistan and build connections with regions and communities within the polity itself showed, once again, that British policy in the late nineteenth century was characterised more by continuity than rupture. Similar ideas about sovereignty, ethnography and indirect rule continued to be employed, under different avatars, until at least the beginning of the twentieth century.

Chapter three

Incorporating north-western Afghanistan through 'indirect rule'. Categories of social difference in the making of an imperial border, 1884-87

After the end of the second Afghan war in 1881, the Afghan Boundary Commission – hereafter A.B.C. – of 1884-1887 was the first major episode in Anglo-Afghan relations. The commission, together with its Russian counterpart and the contribution of an attaché sent by the amir of Kabul, delimited Afghanistan's north-western border towards Central Asia, north of Maimena, between the Murghab and the Oxus rivers. In the early 1880s, the political situation in the areas under the purview of the boundary commission was politically uncertain: Zulfikar, Panjdeh, Maruchack and Maimena – the regions north of Herat where the boundary was drawn – were not under the direct control of the government of Kabul. Henry Rawlinson, influential diplomat and Russophobe, pointed out that at that time 'the Afghan border States between the Murghab and the Oxus are themselves at present in a very uncertain state of dependency'.[490] These polities, ruled by local chiefs or *mirs*, paid only nominal allegiance to the amir and were often resisting attempts to increase governmental authority.[491] Thus, when the commission started its works the whole area was politically fragmented and largely independent from the government of Kabul.[492]

In 1884 amir Abdur Rahman Khan, who had been appointed to the post by the government of India in 1881, was still in the initial phases of consolidating his rule. At the commencement of the commission's work in October 1884 the government's reach did not extend much beyond Kabul and Kandahar. The 'transfer of power' of 1880-81 that had marked the passage from British to the amir's rule in Kabul and Kandahar had been conceived by the government of India as a 'concession' of territories to a local ruler appointed by the British themselves.[493] In July 1880, after a few months of negotiations, the British handed over the government of Kabul to Abdur Rahman Khan, who had been establishing himself in the northern

[490] 'Nos. 49-144, The Boundaries of Afghanistan', March 1884, sec. 68, Foreign Department, Secret E, NAI.
[491] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*.
[492] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 106–9; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 88.
[493] 'Nos. 518-535'.

province of Kataghan over the previous months. The Barakzai sardar and grandson of amir Dost Muhammad Khan was initially appointed as 'amir of Kabul and its dependencies' only.[494] At that point, British India was still planning to retain what had become the Kandahar state in its indirect possession under Wali Shere Ali Khan. However, after the defeat of the latter by Ayub Khan at Maiwand in August that year the city passed again under British occupation until it was finally handed over to Abdur Rahman in April 1881. The amir was able to annex the province thanks to British money and military equipment in September 1881.[495] In the subsequent years, the amir progressively consolidated his rule and between 1884 and 1896 many independent or semi-independent areas were formally included under the government of Kabul: Herat in October 1881; Maimana, then part of Turkestan, in 1884; Turkestan and Badakhshan in 1888-9; Hazarajat in 1893; Wakhan in 1895; Kafiristan in 1896.[496] In these years, British-led demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries became a crucial precedent for delineating Anglo-Afghan relations, which had been left undefined upon the amir's assumption of the throne in 1880: boundary making defined Afghanistan's position *vis-à-vis* British India and the extent of the latter's powers over this native polity.

Taking into consideration the local dynamics that developed during the presence of the Anglo-Russian boundary commission in Panjdeh and Murghab, this chapter shows that there was a strong connection between colonial boundary making and Afghan state-building; indeed, they often went hand-in-hand. I argue that between 1884 and 1887 boundary making became an occasion for increasing colonial interference in Afghan affairs. The close connection between boundary commissioners, Afghan administrators and local elites was conducive for the application of colonial ideas of Afghan sociology and governance to the Afghan context, which contributed to reshaping the social and political landscape of Maimana. In the long run, the annexation of this north-western region by the government of Kabul became the blueprint for subsequent incorporations of territory

[494] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 323; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 41–44.
[495] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 324; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 58–62.
[496] As noted by Hassan Kakar, Afghan rights to the Wakhan corridor were defined during the 1893 meeting at Kabul between Henry Mortimer Durand and the amir. However, the amir refused to occupy it directly and Wakhan was thus held by an Afghan wakil but managed from Gilgit by the British. Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 61, 117–18.

along Afghanistan's border, where similar forms of governance would be enacted. The series of British-led boundary commissions embroiled representatives of the colonial state in Afghan territory for protracted periods of time. They were not only engaged in the actual demarcation of the border but were often involved in local political and social dynamics. Local contingencies, as well as the policy line dictated from Calcutta, ingrained British officials in the day-to-day work performed by local administrators and made them into active motors of the administrative restructuring of these areas. In these Anglo-Afghan encounters, boundary officials took an active part, and often directed, the annexation processes: they encouraged the amir to settle these borderlands and relocate local non-Pashtun communities.

In the long run, the A.B.C. became the stepping stone for the British-led demarcation of the borders in Turkestan, Badakhshan, the Pamirs between 1888 and 1895, and the Durand Line between 1893 and 1896. Boundary demarcation triggered the addition of significant portions of territory, which defined Afghanistan's cartographic existence as we know it today and permanently changed the relations between the Afghan borderlands and the government of Kabul.[497] Boundary making also crucially influenced the government of Kabul's relation towards its frontier areas. It set the ground for undivided sovereignty to become an important rubric for managing new annexations. In the border areas, local administrations underwent processes of reform that deepened their links with Kabul and let to more direct interference and control over provincial affairs.

This chapter suggests an approach to British-led boundary making that considers the external influences in internal state-building. In fact, the A.B.C. shows that British involvement in frontier making was far from neutral. The 'advice' commissioners gave local Afghan officials on how to manage the newly incorporated areas drew on colonial understandings of Afghan sociology and reflected British India's own political agenda, notably the alliances it was building with local ethnic minorities. As will be seen below, ethnological categories were central in boundary making and became a key principle in Kabul's own rearrangement of some border regions following the demarcation, an aspect on which the literature has remained silent. Moreover, the different layers of interference British India was able to exercise

[497] For the demarcation process of Afghanistan's frontiers, see generally Gopalakrishnan, *The Geography and Politics of Afghanistan*, 70–109.

through the boundary commission also fundamentally questioned the nature of Anglo-Afghan relations in these years and the extent to which the early 1880s fell within an alleged period of non-interference – the 'forward policy' resuming only with Lansdowne's viceroyalty.[498] At the same time, the ambiguous position Abdur Rahman Khan was left in 1881 *vis-à-vis* British India started to assume firmer contours with the A.B.C., when closer control over Afghan affairs was built up at the local level, influencing Afghan administrators and cooperating with local ethnic minorities. The degree of change boundary making brought to the local political and social environment crucially questioned the idea that drawing boundaries was informed by imperial considerations alone. In fact, as will be seen in chapter four, Afghanistan was at this time considered an integral part of the British Indian empire and the policies designed on the ground re-evaluate the degree to which boundary making was seen as a form of empire building in its own right, in which the dynamics unleashed at the local level assumed embryonic colonial forms.

This British-led boundary commission has largely been neglected by the scholarship dealing with Anglo-Afghan relations. The contemporary accounts on the demarcation, published by British members of the boundary commission, come in the form of chronological narratives of the events and give details on the geography of the area, the commission's movements, and its interaction with its Russian counterpart.[499] A number of more recent works have dealt with the Anglo-Russian diplomatic negotiations regarding the settlement of their respective 'spheres of influence' during the so-called 'Great Game'. These diplomatic histories notably emphasise the series of talks and exchanges of correspondence taking place between London and St Petersburg and devote minor or no attention at all to the events taking place on the ground during the demarcation processes.[500] An exception is the 'Panjdeh incident' of April 1885, which has been the subject of a number of accounts.[501] However, this set

[498] Asghar Ḥasan Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907: A Study in Foreign Relations* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1972), 223.
[499] Charles Edward Yate, *Northern Afghanistan; Or, Letters from the Afghan Boundary Commission* (Edinburgh & London: W. Blackwood & sons, 1888); Arthur Campbell Yate, *England and Russia Face to Face in Asia; Travels with the Afghan Boundary Commission* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1887).
[500] Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*; Gulzad, *External Influences*; Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907*; Singhal, *India and Afghanistan 1876-1907*.
[501] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 328; David Gillard, *Struggle for Asia, 1828-1914: A Study in British and Russian Imperialism* (London: Methuen Young books, 1980); Anila Bali, 'The Russo-Afghan Boundary Demarcation 1884-95: Britain and the Russian Threat to the Security of India' (University of Ulster, 1985).

of works again engages mostly with the succession of events that led to what became a diplomatic crisis between Russia and Britain from the point of view of diplomatic exchanges and movements of troops on the ground.[502] The literature dealing with Afghanistan's history during the reign of Abdur Rahman is largely restricted to the evolution of the Afghan state during these years – especially the reforms of the army and bureaucracy – but has seen these processes as largely internal.[503] These works have treated the boundary commission as a minor episode of Abdur Rahman's process of internal reformation and 'modernisation'.[504] Nancy Tapper and McChesney, who have researched the colonisation of north-western Afghanistan by Pashtun settlers, do not take into account the role the A.B.C. played in the internal resettlement of people. In fact, while relying on the documents compiled by the boundary commission, the developments of the Afghan state are seen as detached from the on-going demarcation of the border.[505] On the whole, the literature on the A.B.C. has privileged the imperial dimension of Anglo-Afghan relations and Anglo-Russian rivalry in Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, while by the mid-1880s Russia had indeed become a perceivable presence on Afghanistan's northern shores, thus spurring new concerns about its advances in Calcutta and London, the demarcation of Afghanistan's boundaries was not done with solely imperial concerns in mind.

This chapter nuances existing approaches. On a broader level, it questions the multiple facets of Anglo-Afghan relations in the 1880s. Historians have so far not detangled the nexus between alleged British non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs and the dense web of relations that bound the two polities in this decade through political missions, migration, commerce, correspondence, employment. The reliance on the categories of an independent Afghanistan and a non-interventionist Britain has limited our understanding of how British influence might have reached this native polity through the back-door. On a more particular level, this chapter interrogates how British exertion of influence over Afghanistan went beyond a mere search for influence through the channels of official diplomacy.

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[502] Syed Barakat Ahmad, 'Panjdeh Incident and the Occupation of Egypt', *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 30, no. 2 (1 April 1974): 148–52; J. M. Brereton, 'Panjdeh Crisis, 1885 - Russians and British in Central Asia', *History Today* 29, no. Jan (1979): 46.
[503] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*.
[504] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*; Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*; Sykes, *History of Afghanistan*.
[505] Nancy Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36, no. 1 (1973): 55–79.

Historians have commonly argued that British India was able to restrain Afghanistan in its foreign relations on the basis of the amir's dependence on British India's subsidy and military equipment. Their approach starts from the assumption that Afghanistan at the time was able to keep its status as an independent and non-colonised country – albeit with all its limitations – that had entered into an agreement with British India. However, how is it possible to reconcile this formula with British India's active role in defining the country's boundaries in the 1880s and 1890s? The very category of 'foreign relations' entailed much more multifaceted implications than the limitation of Afghanistan's contacts with the outside world. Foreign relations became a broad and undefined category in which many different instances of British influence-building could be subsumed. As will be seen below, this category was employed in British-led boundary making and gave the boundary commission the manoeuvring space not only to make its influence felt with the amir, but also attempt to build empire on the ground, in the form of a more permanent British presence.

The chapter starts by analysing the form of Anglo-Afghan relations in the two decades that followed the Afghan war. It questions the degree to which British India's official policy of non-interference was applied in practice during the Afghan Boundary Commission. It shows that the undefined nature of Anglo-Afghan relations laid out in 1880-1 with the appointment of Abdur Rahman as amir allowed for subtler and more informal ways of projecting colonial influence onto Afghanistan's internal affairs while managing to maintain a semblance of Afghan independence and British non-interference. The chapter then looks at the actual demarcation of Afghanistan's north-western border and points out the possibility it created for attempts at engineering 'imperial formations' in the area, while introducing Western forms of statehood in the settlement of the boundary dispute. The chapter concludes by showing how the British officers' cooperation with local non-Pashtun communities facilitated their intervention in boundary making and contributed to the introduction of criteria based on ethnology into the area. In the long term, criteria of sociological difference and practices of governance devised during the demarcation informed internal state-building along Afghanistan's frontiers.

British imperial policy in the 1880s and 1890s: recasting Afghan dependency beyond subsidiarity

The delimitation of Afghanistan's north-western border was as much an enterprise in imperial boundary making as an attempt to concretise British India's policy towards Afghanistan that had emerged after the war. In the 1870s, as seen in chapter one, Russia's presence had been publicly invoked to legitimise British India's more assertive role in Afghanistan, and many British officials considered a Russian advance towards India a real possibility. At the same time, key decision-makers in British India, among whom Lytton himself, firmly recognised that Russia was at that point too far away and too unprepared for any attempt to move southwards. By the time of the boundary commission, in October 1884, Russia had made considerable advances in Central Asia, thus getting closer to the polities encompassed, in one form or the other, within the orbit of the government of Kabul, notably Maimena, Turkestan, Badakhshan, Sighnan, Roshan.[506]

In the mid-1880s, a number of influential British administrators considered a Russian invasion of India a concrete possibility and were concerned with this rival imperial power taking possession of strategic localities, such as Herat, and making inroads into Afghanistan itself or fomenting unrest in the British-controlled subcontinent. Administrators such as Captain George Campbell Napier, an army officer who had been on a political mission to north-eastern Persia in the mid-1870s, and Rawlinson started to become more vocal about the Russia's advance. Napier notably pointed out the possibility of the Eimaks and Hazaras, two of the non-Pashtun tribes present in the area, being won over by Russia, which would 'drive a wedge into the heart of the Afghan mountains that must end in the subjugation of the whole population'.[507] As Bernard Porter has pointed out, imperial concerns over Russia's encroachment on British interests and influence in Central Asia and the Middle East should be seen in the wider picture of imperial competition following the pacification of Europe into nation states during the 1870s. In the 1880s Britain was concerned about Russia as much as about France in South-East Asia – upper Burma would be annexed in 1885 – and Germany in Africa and the Pacific.[508] In this light, the demarcation of the Maimena boundary was part of Britain's wider imperial concerns in Eurasia that stretched from Europe to the Middle East and Central Asia. However,

[506] Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, 27–38, 77–86; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 106–19.
[507] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. K.W. No. 1.
[508] Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-2004*, 4th ed (Harlow, Essex, England ; New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004), 74–118.

on the ground British apprehension of Russia triggered multifaceted dynamics that went beyond the delimitation of an international boundary to fence off Russian encroachments but assumed significant local dimensions. British India attempted to extend and maintain in concrete ways its influence in north-western Afghanistan. Its considerations were not dominated by the logic that underpinned its imperial concerns over Russia, but related, once again, to the very position Afghanistan ought to take *vis-à-vis* the government of India.

For the government of India, the Afghan Boundary Commission of 1884-87 became a major episode for formulating additional and more concrete forms of influence over the Afghan polity. The works of the commission went beyond the delimitation of the border itself and actively engaged the structures of local government, making it an occasion of 'further intercourse', as Napier put it.[509] The captain argued that, during the survey 'of what we consider and intend to be the Amir's northern territory', British officers should be allowed 'intercourse with the Amir's officers'.[510] He also envisioned a long-term increase of British India's presence in this area through the creation of a telegraphic line from India to Kabul and a railway to Kandahar, as well as 'some aid in the fortification of Herat and Balkh', which were projects the government of India had entertained also during the war.[511] Contrary to Lytton's policy, now the government of India advocated a strong Afghanistan, that 'might with [us] hold their frontier' in case of war.[512] Fragmenting the region into smaller polities, the keystone of the Lytton policy, had given way to concerns about a possible fragmentation of Afghanistan – 'a Bulgaria of the Russo-Indian question' as Napier put it. For many British observers at the time, Afghanistan had to be made into 'an independent Asiatic State, kept under our control through constant fear of Russia, and gradually developing a national sentiment, and a promise of national existence'.[513] However, the vision of an independent polity which could firmly secure its hold over its territories did not mean actual abstention from interference on British India's part. The active intervention attempted during the war, when Kabul and Kandahar were being transformed into subsidiary polities, was pushed on the north-west in different forms. In the mid-1880s British strategies did

[509] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. K.W. No. 1.
[510] Ibid.
[511] 3Ibid.; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 153.
[512] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. K.W. No. 1.
[513] Ibid., sec. K.W. No. 2 p. 11-12.

not push for formal subordination at the centres of Afghan politics – Kabul and Kandahar – but attempted to build a presence in more peripheral areas of the kingdom of Kabul. In these areas, where the authority of the amir was not yet fully established, British officials tried to build influence through informal interactions with the local political establishment.

The reversal of the Lytton policy of fragmenting and subordinating Afghanistan pursued in the 1870s did not merely revert British India's approach to non-interference. For the rest of the century, Afghanistan's position *vis-à-vis* British India would be different from the policy of 'masterly inactivity' avowedly pursued in the 1860s and 1870s, and ranged to different degrees between 'forward policy' and an official line of non-interference in Afghan affairs, whose boundaries were as blurred as ever.[514] Scholars have defined Afghanistan's status in the 1880s and 1890s interchangeably as 'buffer state', 'protectorate', 'client state' or just part of Britain's 'sphere of influence'.[515] However, these terms limit our understanding of what Anglo-Afghan relations amounted to in these years, as they underline the idea that British relations with Afghanistan, notably regarding the demarcation of the latter's borders, was designed around creating a space of separation between British India and the Russian empire. At the same time, they stress the modified form Anglo-Afghan relations took after the Afghan war, when British India assumed control of Afghanistan's foreign relations, a move that had been attempted through the 1879 treaty of Gandamak and that represented a significant change if compared to Anglo-Afghan relations during the reign of Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali Khan.[516]

In the 1880s and 1890s, Afghanistan was not simply an independent polity between two major imperial powers. At the same time, the type of dependence and connectedness it entertained towards British India did not solely amount to its inclusion into British India's 'informal empire', as James Onley has pointed out.[517] Napier argued that Afghanistan's frontiers not only needed to be strengthened in view of Russia's presence, but the prospect of a Russian advance in the north-west also

[514] Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907*, 222.
[515] Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 2004, 87; Ewans, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, 1; Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*, 304; Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907*, 220.
[516] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 340–43; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*.
[517] James Onley, 'The Raj Reconsidered: British India's Informal Empire and Spheres of Influence in Asia and Africa', *Asian Affairs* 40, no. 1 (1 March 2009): 44–62.

provided the reason for further interference into Afghanistan. As will be elaborated further in chapter four, in the 1880-90s major British public figures, such as Nathaniel Curzon, Henry Mortimer Durand and Alfred Lyall, instinctively considered Afghanistan's north-western frontier as British India's imperial or outer frontier. According to this logic, Afghanistan proper, as an integral part of the empire, was subjected to various forms of control and influence by the government of India, which did not follow any preconceived model or form. The type of interference the officers of the A.B.C. devised during their almost four-year stay in Afghanistan sharply questioned easy and straightforward definitions of Afghanistan's position towards British India and its inclusion into any category of imperial set-up.[518] The different labels with which historians have tried to explain Anglo-Afghan relations do not do justice to the complexity of the dynamics involved. In practice, these relations entailed more direct interference than the category of the 'buffer state' would call for, but they also produced informal and indirect ways of building British influence in the country, which went beyond British India's control of foreign relations and its material support – in terms of military equipment and a financial subsidy.

The type of relation the government envisioned with Afghanistan was fraught with many of the contradictions that had characterised the government's approach in the 1870s. The blueprint of the Indian native states continued to exercise a certain degree of influence. Paramountcy, as much as in the 1870s, continued to be the rubric through which the empire could, in the words of Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, 'exercise power in the field of foreign affairs, defence, communication' of native polities, thus 'guaranteeing the rulers protection against foreign and domestic enemies', while mostly leaving the polities 'internally autonomous'.[519] However, the failure to cast Afghanistan into the system of native states in 1878-81 prompted the government of India to complement its approach with new strategies of influence-building. The 1880s and 1890s saw the experimentation with different models of ruling native polities throughout the empire.[520] As Caroline Keen has argued, in late nineteenth century British India, interference, albeit disguised under different forms, was part of the colonial state's action towards the Indian native polities throughout the

[518] Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, 18–22.
[519] Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy', 139.
[520] John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 214–22.

second half of the nineteenth century.[521] In post-war Afghanistan, the degree of British paramountcy was never sanctioned by a treaty, while previously in 1879 British control over Shere Ali's foreign relations and the imposition of a resident at Kabul had been officialised by the agreement at Gandamak.[522]

During the 1880-81 transfer of power of Kabul and Kandahar to the newly appointed amir Abdur Rahman, Anglo-Afghan relations were shaped by the negotiations conducted by Sir Lepel Griffin, appointed in 1880 as political officer in Kabul to negotiate the withdrawal from Kabul.[523] The terms worked out between the two parties made British India responsible for the protection of the domains of the government of Kabul from foreign aggression, while retaining complete control over its foreign relations. This informal understanding would be variously reiterated over the following years as the basis for British India's relations with the amir. Contrary to what Hassan Kakar has stated, the investiture of Abdur Rahman as amir of Kabul in 1880, finalised through one letter sent by Griffin to the amir rather than an official document, never assumed the binding value of a treaty.[524] These undefined terms left the concrete meaning and content of Anglo-Afghan relations unclear and allowed for them to be continually contested and re-negotiated by both parties. In the 1890s, as will be seen in chapter four, the strategy of leaving relations with Afghanistan undefined became the key strategy employed by the government of India and was at the basis for the controversial settlement of the Durand boundary line between 1893 and 1896.

Throughout these decades the government of India steadily experimented with different degrees of control and interference over Afghanistan. At various times the government pressed the amir to accept different means of colonial intervention: British agents on his newly demarcated frontiers, telegraphic lines to Kabul and a railway line from Chaman to Kandahar. These attempts were largely unsuccessful and the amir resisted formal extensions of British influence. However, the government of India was crucial in upholding the amir's rule and notably acted to protect what the British called the 'prince' of Kabul from external as well as internal dangers. It

[521] Keen, *Princely India and the British*.
[522] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 323; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 168.
[523] Katherine Prior, 'Griffin, Sir Lepel Henry (1838–1908)', ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004).
[524] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 168.

provided Abdur Rahman with money and military equipment to be used to strengthen his rule and expand his authority over new areas. Moreover, during the almost two decades spanning from 1881 to 1900 British India and Persia, allies at the time, admitted hundreds of 'Afghan exiles' to their territory. As Kakar has noted, these exiles were largely political opponents of the amir, whose wealth he incorporated and who were thus barred from having a stake on the Afghan political scene.[525] British India, while protesting about the amir's policy of expelling these personalities, continued to take charge of them, granting them pensions, housing and in certain cases offices and jagirs.

The government of India was also receptive of the amir's requests to have these people removed as far as possible from the Afghan frontier and many were consequently resettled to distant localities in British India. Moreover, on occasion of the A.B.C. the amir complied with British instructions concerning the demarcation and settlement of Afghanistan's north-western frontier and made use of the conditions created by the boundary-making to expand his rule over Maimana, as will be seen below. Thus, the picture of Anglo-Afghan relations in these two decades eluded simple classifications. The interaction between the two polities did not entail 'conventional' forms of imperial subordination, but was centred on alternative means of establishing colonial influence. In this context, boundary-making became an occasion for the experimentation with different means and strategies of strengthening the ties of dependency. They shaded into attempts of indirect rule, which often bypassed the official form of relations with the court of Kabul.

The position of the amir *vis-à-vis* British India in these years was multifaceted and displayed both fierce resistance to the imposition of British policies and compliance with them. In the correspondence with the viceroy, Abdur Rahman Khan engaged the question of his own dependence on British India and the differences it entailed if compared to other native polities in the region, notably the native princes of India. The amir displayed a certain degree of awareness of his subordination to the government of India. In May 1880, when negotiations for the amirship were underway with Griffin, Abdur Rahman asked the viceroy to clarify his position for the future:

[525] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*.

> What are to be the boundaries of my dominions? Would Kandahar be included in them? Would a European envoy or a British force remain in Afghanistan? What enemy of the British Government am I expected to repel? What benefits does the British Government promise to confer on me and my countrymen? And what services do they expect in return?[526]

From his assumption to the throne, the amir had recognised that Afghanistan at that point existed within the sphere of British paramountcy and that his position as amir was dependent on British India's concurrence. When petitioning the government of India for a map of the northern border of his domains in 1883, he further portrayed 'himself to the Viceroy as the guardian (*sarhad-dar*) of the British Indian empire', thus emphasising his role as both ally and dependent.[527] However, he also made it a point to distinguish himself and his government from the position the native states of India held towards British India.

During an official meeting at Rawalpindi in 1885 Abdur Rahman addressed the viceroy, Lord Dufferin, on the issue of Anglo-Afghan relations and pointed out that, contrary to the allegiance professed by the Indian princes attending the conference, his government should be taken into higher account by the British government because it was different. The amir stressed that his position was closely bound and interdependent with the interests of the government of India. He argued that a non-satisfactory boundary agreement 'lowered' his 'dignity' and directly affected the 'profit and loss' of the British government.[528] Joseph Ridgeway, the British commissioner, remarked in January 1888 that 'the Amir is very sensitive on this point', pointing out that 'Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan [the Afghan *attaché* to the A.B.C.] has, I understand, recently written to him that he is evidently regarded by the Government of India and by the Commission in the same light as one of the protected native Chiefs of India'.[529] Abdur Rahman himself, as Shere Ali before him, was aware of the broader implications of British attempts to extend imperial paramountcy over Afghanistan. He recognised the parallels British authorities were drawing between Afghanistan and the Indian princely states and tried to emphasise that Afghanistan retained a higher degree of independence than these other polities, while also being

[526] Letter from Abdur Rahman Khan to Lepel Griffin, dated 16 May 1880. Cited in Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907*, 197.
[527] Gulzad, *External Influences*, 172.
[528] 'Nos. 1-195, Afghan Boundary Commission. Demarcation of the Frontier Line between Hauzi Khan and Maruchak; Construction of a Dam on the Murghab; Obstructive Attitude Assumed by Kazi Sad-Ud-Din; Correspondence between the Afghans and Russians', July 1886, 26, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[529] Ibid., 51.

aware of the implications Afghanistan's geographical position entailed in the British and Russian advances.

Influencing Afghan state-building: introducing ideas of exclusive sovereignty and territoriality in the making of British India's imperial frontier

The demarcation of Afghanistan's north-western boundary engaged colonial notions of imperial as well as native sovereignty. British India's engagement in boundary drawing outside its directly controlled dominions impinged upon the colonial state's very understanding of its own sovereignty.[530] The colonial state's experiments with indirect rule concomitant to the boundary demarcation show that north-western Afghanistan, despite not a directly controlled territory, was seen as an integral part of the empire. As will be seen in more detail in chapter four, the application of different degrees of sovereignty on different parts of the empire brought with it shifting understandings of Britain's imperial boundaries. In this light, contrary to commonly held assumptions, the border demarcated by the A.B.C. should be considered British India's imperial boundary, while the Durand line or North-West Frontier should be seen as a regional or internal boundary of the empire. In the north-west of Afghanistan, the undefined shape of Anglo-Afghan relations allowed the British presence to experiment with building a direct and permanent imperial connection with the region. In fact, the strategies employed during the A.B.C. amounted to an active attempt to build empire in this quarter of Afghanistan. As Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranaham have theorised, 'imperial formations', defined as 'the active and contingent process of [empire] making and unmaking', did not always engage with 'institutions and fixed ideologies' of the empire.[531] On the contrary, 'blurred genres of rule and partial sovereignty' were dominant in the development of empire throughout time. They mapped a non-linear process of developing 'imperial formations' that reflected British India's approach in Maimena and along the North-West Frontier, where they attempted to build imperial influence in 'non-conventional' ways.[532] Again, as in the case of the second Afghan war described in chapter two, British

[530] Nicholas Dirks, 'Imperial Sovereignty', in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, and Peter C. Perdue, School for Advanced Research Advanced Seminar Series (Santa Fe, N.M.: Oxford [U.K.]: School for Advanced Research Press; James Currey, 2007).
[531] Ann Laura Stoler and Carole McGranahan, eds., 'Introduction', in *Imperial Formations*, School for Advanced Research Advanced Seminar Series (Santa Fe, N.M.: Oxford [U.K.]: School for Advanced Research Press; James Currey, 2007), 8.
[532] Ibid.

strategies questioned the degree to which Anglo-Afghan interactions could be defined as imperial. It pushed the limits of boundary making as a formative moment for the emergence of different layers of colonial rule.

At the same time, the A.B.C. impinged on the notions and forms of sovereignty and suzerainty held by the Afghan government over the territories that were becoming part of the Afghan state. The government of Kabul questioned and recast its relation with tribal leadership, as well as the relations between the tribes and the territories they inhabited. The Afghan boundary commission, more than any encouragement and material support that had been given to Dost Muhammad Khan and Shere Ali Khan for the consolidation of their rule – military equipment and financial subsidies – concretely prompted the amir to exercise closer and more direct authority on these areas. This argument has been advanced by Benjamin Hopkins in relation to Persia's state-building following the delimitation of the Perso-Afghan boundary in 1870-2. In the case under analysis here, the introduction and 'indigenisation' of 'Western norms of statehood' was complemented by the employment of overtly ethnological criteria, which intersected with claims for sovereignty.[533] In the adjudication of land claims between Afghanistan and Russia, tribes, notably the Turkomans and the Char Aimaks living along the border, had a central role. The employment of sovereignty *cum* ethnology as criteria for boundary making created the conditions for a subsequent settlement of the border areas that implemented Afghan territorial claims along tribal lines, an approach that would be adopted in the settlement of other previously independent or semi-independent areas, such as Turkestan and Hazarajat.

For the British government the decision on whether to proceed with the demarcation of the northern frontier of Afghanistan was really one around first to ascertain over what areas the amir was able to 'exercise an effective control'.[534] In August 1883 the secretary of state for India, Earl of Kimberley, wrote to the government in Calcutta that in a recent conversation between J.G. Kennedy, the British *chargé d'affairs* at St Petersburg, and Zinovief, the chief of the Asiatic department of the Russian foreign office, the suggestion was made for the timely delimitation of the Afghan boundary. He asked the government of India for views on

[533] Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity', 233.
[534] 'Nos. 49-144', 67.

'the expediency of attempting at present to define the northern boundary of Afghanistan from Khoja Saleh westwards, and as to the steps which should be taken in order to ascertain clearly over what districts and tribes in that direction the Amir can exercise an effective control'.[535] British authorities were in fact concerned with the series of smaller polities on the north of Herat whose allegiance to Kabul could not be taken for granted and over which the amir had to impose his authority if a boundary line was to be settled.[536] The uncertainty of the connection between the local tribes and the government of Kabul was here at the centre of the government's concerns. Especially the inclusion of the Turkoman tribes into Afghanistan, and the subsequent need to annex them, would represent, in the words of Rawlinson, 'a never-failing source of weakness, irritation and danger' for the amir of Kabul and a very difficult enterprise in practice given the extent of territory and the number of families.[537] In the demarcation of this boundary the question of the amir's sovereignty was at the centre of the debate between Russia and Britain. Acceptable forms of sovereignty, where not immediately detachable, were engineered by the boundary commission and pushed on local Afghan administrators through the assistance of the British officers.

In the demarcation of the border, tangible forms of Afghan authority were at the basis of British claims over land. Notably the presence of agricultural lands and permanent settlements, together with other signs of stable rather than nomadic life became important criteria in the adjudication process.[538] On more than one occasion, the British authorities forwarded requests to the Afghan officers to provide proof and documentation regarding, for example, the extension of pasturages. Kazi Sad-ud-din reported that they 'were told to take evidence from the shepherds showing how far they have been in the habit of taking their flocks into the 'Chul' during the last three or four years'. Subsequently, the 'document regarding the pasturages of Andkhui and Kila Wali, which was asked for, was sent to the British Commissioner'.[539] The

[535] Ibid., 63.
[536] Ibid., 68.
[537] Ibid., 68.
[538] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 62; Neeladri Bhattacharya, 'Pastoralists in a Colonial World', in *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia*, ed. David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha, Studies in Social Ecology and Environmental History (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[539] 'Nos. 849-881, Migration of Sariks of Kila Wali. Removal of the Jamshidis of the Bala Murghab Districts. Arrest and Deportation to Kabul of the Principal Hazara, Firozkuhi, and Taimani Chiefs', July 1886, sec. 862, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI; Ridgeway points out that 'chul' is the local

Afghan official collected documents from the inhabitants of the areas in order to demonstrate their right to land – based on 'ancient right and present possession' – and sent them to the amir as well as to the British representatives.[540]

At the same time, Afghan officials were also used by British authorities to determine the geographical location of places, which had been included in the 1873 Agreement without however knowing their precise coordinates. As the Kazi reported:

> We were told […] to try and discover a place, a shrine, or a hamlet, or a ford, or a hill called Khoja Saleh below Kham-i-ab on the left bank of the river [Oxus] or on its right bank; or if this were not possible, it should be proved that the whole of Kham-i-ab is included in the district of Khoja Salar, and that the whole district is called Khoja Salar.[541]

Afghan officers were used by the British as intermediaries to reach out to the local population as well as to collect information about them. Local officials were also employed in enquiring about the exact position and extent of tribal groups. Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan for example instructed the governor of Herat, on British orders, to 'get correct information as to how many Panjdeh Turkoman families have settled at Kila Wali'.[542] The information was then to be passed on to Ridgeway. In this process, Afghan administrators took an active part in determining the application of the criteria of territoriality and tribal difference at the basis of the demarcation.

Already in October 1883, when a Russo-Persian boundary commission had been demarcating the north-eastern border of Persia, the question of Afghan authority in the region between the Hari Rud and the Murghab rivers was raised by R.F. Thomson, the British *attaché* in Teheran. He argued that in order to exclude Russian territorial claims over the area in the future, the Amir should:

> Take measure, while the Russians are still at some distance from his frontier, to establish his authority over all the territory between the Heri Rud and Murghab rivers which may formerly have been in Afghan occupation or to which the Afghans are now considered to have a just claim; for all districts on the right bank of the Heri Rud which have not been included in the Afghan territory, or are not actually in Afghan occupation, will, doubtless, be eventually occupied by Russia.[543]

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name for the barren land between the Murghab and the Oxus. West Ridgeway, 'The New Afghan Frontier', *Nineteenth Century*, 1887, 473, BL.

[540] Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity', 249.

[541] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 862.

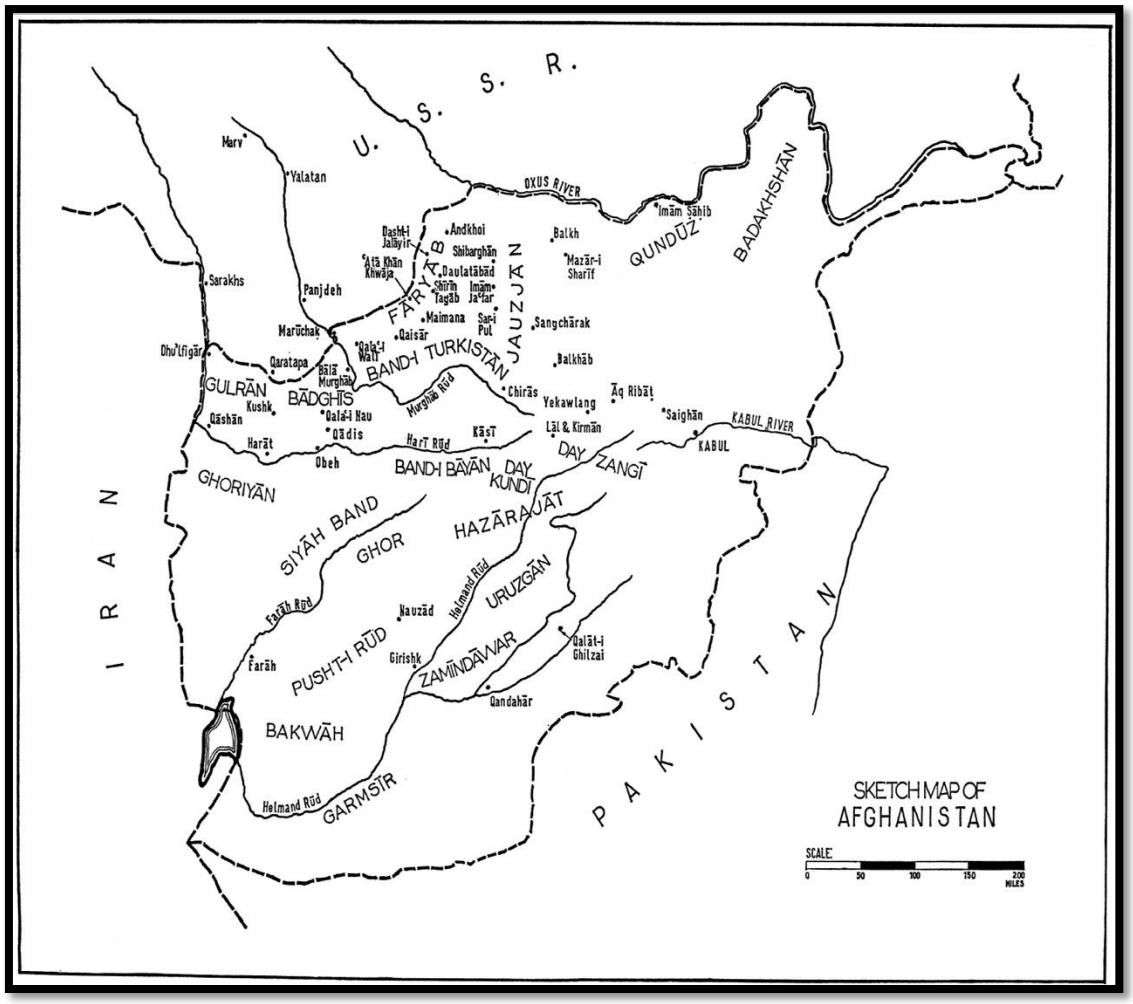
[542] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 4.

[543] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. 70.

As the sovereignty over these lands was not clearly defined, Thomson pushed for the extension of visible forms of Afghan authority. Historically, Kabul's hold over this distant area had been weak and often intermittent. In the early 1880s north-western Afghanistan presented a kind of set-up that had been characteristic of many Mughal provinces. There, assertion of sovereign power from the government of Kabul was feeble and did not imply much intervention from a central state, but allowed for different and often overlapping political alliances.[544] However, through the settlement of the frontier the possibility for the local elites and tribal groups to shift alliances between regional polities could not subsist in the same way it had before. Now, the application of ideas of undivided sovereignty and territoriality did not allow for multiple layers of suzerain relations.

While Russian troops were proceeding towards Merv, eventually occupying the city in February 1884, the government of Kabul proceeded to the occupation of Badghis and Panjdeh following British advice.[545] The role of the British commissioners in the occupation of Panjdeh by the Afghan troops is an aspect that the literature has so far failed to acknowledge. Instead, it has considered the occupation of that place an independent decision of the amir and his generals or not directly related to the presence of the A.B.C.[546] However, British officials had a crucial role in directing the movements of Afghan troops in that direction. In September 1884 the amir moved his troops from Bala Murghab to Maruchak, further north on the Murghab river in order to arrange for the defences of the place.[547] In December 1884 Peter Lumsden, who had taken the lead of the boundary commission's establishment

[544] Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, 7–44.
[545] 'Nos. 187-326A, Afghan Boundary Commission: 1 Russians at Pul I Khatun 2 Alleged Discourteous Letter from Amir 3 Amir's Will to Have a Voice in the Decisions of the Commissioners 4 The Zone Question 5 Payment of Supplies 6 Proposed Demarcation of the Northern Boundary 7 Return Route of the Mission 8 The Panjdeh Question 9 Khilat to Azad Khan of Kharan for Aid to the Mission 10 Warm Clothing for the Escort 11 Recovery of One Came Strayed with Its Load during the March of the Mission 12 Proceedings of Certain Officers', February 1885, 192, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[546] Bilgrāmī, *Afghanistan and British India, 1793-1907*, 208; Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 59–60.
[547] 'Nos. 187-326A', 224.



Map of Afghanistan[548]

in October 1884, wrote to the amir congratulating him on the 'great endeavours now being made by you to reclaim and repopulate the long-deserted valleys of the Kushk and Murgahb, and to realize the strong inclination of the Sarukh Turkomans to continue under your rule'.[549] Lumsden remarked that, because the Sarikhs at Panjdeh, at this point of time under the authority of Kabul, were being induced, presumably by the Russian officers, to join 'their brethren at Yulatan, or even to seek to supplant [Kabul's] Government […] by that of a foreign power' he advised the amir to exercise a just rule over the Turkoman population of Panjdeh. He stressed 'the vital importance of treating the population of these rich and highly-favoured valleys with every possible leniency, […] particularly at the present time when other neighbouring

[548] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan'.
[549] 'Nos. 187-326A', 188.

Turkoman tribes have been relieved of all burdens' by the Russian government of the adjacent areas.[550]

Before the 'Panjdeh incident' of April 1885, when a Russian regiment attacked an Afghan force stationed near this oasis along the Murghab river, the British were strongly in favour of drawing the Russo-Afghan boundary north of that locality.[551] In Lumsden's opinion, 'if Her Majesty's Government desire to maintain the integrity of Afghanistan by delimitation of a frontier, it is absolutely essential that Russia should not overstep the natural desert border' between Zulfikar in the west and the Oxus in the north-east.[552] Since Russia's hold over the Turkoman tribes was 'not yet sufficiently strong to enable her to dictate terms' the amir should be left 'to take such steps as may be advisable for [the] protection of his rights'.[553] Thus, in order to avoid 'practically handing over north-western Afghanistan to Russian influence and future possession' the government of India advocated the employment of the amir as proxy state-builder.[554] As seen in chapter two, during the Afghan war British authorities in Kabul had attempted to extend British influence towards Herat and Turkestan through the mediation of local rulers who were given funds and often backed by British regiments. Now, in a similar fashion, Abdur Rahman was driven to secure new territories that would allow the British authorities to demonstrate Afghan suzerainty along the disputed frontier and thus claim these lands for the government of Kabul.

The occupation of new territory along the Murghab river by the government of Kabul raised questions around the form of authority the amir was meant to exercise over them. From the point of view of the government of India, a major hindrance for the establishment of unfettered rule by Kabul in the areas contested by Russia was the co-existence of different centres of native authority and layers of administration. In December 1884, Lumsden wrote to the secretary of state for foreign affairs, the Earl of Granville, about the problems the uncertain and overlapping administrative structure of the area was raising in governing the area:

> The difficulty of administration may be realised from the fact that Yalantush Khan, Chief of the Jamshidis, was last spring [1884] selected by the

[550] Ibid.
[551] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 328.
[552] 'Nos. 187-326A', 192.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Ibid.

> Governor of Herat to be Governor of Panjdeh, but that the appointment was not confirmed by the Amir, who deputed his younger brother, Aminulla Khan, to supersede him, consequently making it not only difficult for the present Governor to act with his elder brother, but also with the Governor of Herat, whilst in the interim special powers were conferred upon General Ghaus-ud-din Khan to act in certain matters connected with the district, independent of all these authorities, and, in the midst of this complication of authority, Kazi Sad-ud-din with us persisted upon having his say in the settlement and future administration.[555]

The incorporation of these areas raised questions about the division of administrative functions in the region and the degree to which the government of Kabul ought to promote changes in local governance.

In this period the government of Kabul introduced new forms of administration, which discontinued previous forms of local government. In the process of arranging for the government of Panjdeh the appointments made by the governor of Herat clashed with those of the amir, who pushed for the introduction of new figures, General Ghaus-ud-din Khan and Kazi Sad-ud-din. The governor also sidelined prominent tribal chiefs, such as Yalantush Khan, identified by British authorities as the main Jamshidi chief.[556] Kazi Sad-ud-din in particular had acted as *kazi* for the British during the occupation of Kandahar between 1879 and 1881, was then employed by the government of Kabul as its representative on the boundary commission. Subsequently, he was made governor of Herat in 1887 by Abdur Rahman Khan.[557] Certain areas of the administration were made over to the general from the purview of the governor of Herat and Yalantush Khan himself. Most importantly, after the end of the boundary demarcation the general remained as governor of Bala Murghab, in what became another district under the direct administration of Kabul. The case of Yalantush Khan displays the degree to which colonial boundary making impacted local political and administrative structures. The appointment of these new figures showed that shifting conceptions of sovereignty were being introduced in the process of administration-building in Panjdeh. The new arrangements were leading towards more direct links between Kabul, which emerged as the central government of Afghanistan, and the areas incorporated through the A.B.C. However, the full extent of the changes introduced in local leadership would become evident only after the departure of the British commissioners in 1887.

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[555] Ibid., 197.
[556] Foreign Office, India, *Biographical Accounts*, 228–29.
[557] Ibid., 167–68.

The principle of 'ethnological continuity' in the assertion of Afghan sovereign rights along the north-western frontier

In the demarcation of the border, the adjudication of lands between Afghanistan and Russia drew on criteria of sovereign as much as ethnological relations. The debate, both on the British and on the Russian side, notably revolved around the position of the Turkoman tribes, who became a central point of Anglo-Russian negotiations and strategies on the ground. On both sides, land claims were decided on the basis of what is here called the principle of 'ethnological continuity': claiming sovereignty over one tribe gave the possibility to put forward territorial claims over the entire land this tribe inhabited. In December 1884 the *Novoe Vremya*, a Russian newspaper, reported on a meeting the Russian geographic society had had about the annexation of Merv by Russia. The article insisted, in the words of the British ambassador in St Petersburg, on the 'necessity of bringing the whole of the Saryk and Salor Turkomans under Russian rule, and that the Frontier to be laid down should be a natural and ethnographic boundary'.[558]

Russian policy makers, as well as its officials on the ground in Central Asia entertained an idea of frontier making that was heavily informed by ideas of ethnicity. During the demarcation of the north-western border of Afghanistan, Russia insisted on its sovereign claims over the Turkomans. In fact, following its occupation of Panjdeh in April 1885, 'Russia claimed the Kusha valley till Babulai, north of Kushk, on the ground that it was cultivated by Panjdeh Sariks. For the same reason it also claimed both sides of the Murghab as far as Maruchak fort, and all the pasturages north of [the] Kila Wali stream, on the ground that the Usbegs had been unable to graze their flocks there before the Turkomans were subjugated by the occupation of Merv'.[559] Furthermore, in May 1885, Condy Stephen, British *attaché* in Teheran, reported to the secretary of state for foreign affairs that the ethnological principle was being employed by Russia also in the 'encroachments on the Ateks of Dereghez and Kelat', an area north-west of Meshed.[560] These localities had been under Persian suzerainty and, according to him, since 1881 Russia had been 'contesting Persian

[558] 'Nos. 187-326A', sec. 254.
[559] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 61.
[560] Arash Khazeni, 'The Steppes of the Oxus and the Boundaries of the Near/Middle East and Central Asia, C. 1500-1800', in *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, ed. Michael E. Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 148.

claims to those districts, and was bent on establishing her authority over them' on the basis of this principle. The Russian officials, on the other hand, argued that:

> Persia has only exercised nominal control over [these tribes, and] is unable to govern them or to adopt the necessary measures against Turkoman incursions. Save one or two villages, all the inhabitants are Turkomans, and unless Russia assumes authority over this tract, a state of disorder will arise which would be injurious to the tranquillity of Akhal.[561]

Stephen pointed out that the population of the Ateks was 'entirely Turkoman', which should allow for 'Russia's claim to these districts on the simple ground that the population is Turkoman'. However, he argued, this 'would practically concede that all the territory, whether Afghan or Persian now inhabited by that race belonged to her'.[562] This was especially more worrisome for Britain because 'there [was] a Turkoman tribe residing in Afghan territory and not far from Herat', the latter being the Sarik Turkomans.[563] This gave Russia the possibility to claim lands well into what the government of India regarded as Afghan territory and close to the city of Herat, annexed by Abdur Rahman in 1881.

Napier had raised these concerns in 1883 writing that the only way to block Russia's territorial claims in the Ateks was to lay down a frontier. He pointed out that:

> Russia has shown clearly that no undefined rights, however just, will be admitted, and she may at any moment declare that the whole country south of Merv up to the settled confines of Herat have come to her by right of her conquest of the Turkomans. It needs only some formal submission of the Teke of Merv to admit of such an assumption, and this would appear to have been already gained.[564]

British India had insisted on Afghan sovereignty over the Turkoman tribes already during the demarcation of the Russo-Persian boundary in 1881. On that occasion, Thomson had pushed for the extension of Afghan, rather than Persian authority over this population. He argued that even if Persian rights to these territories 'may not be questioned by Russia for a time, they would ultimately have to be surrendered to that Power, being claimed as Turkoman territory to which the Shah had no title'.[565] For the British government the security of Afghanistan's frontier once the A.B.C. had left the country was the main concern. Security of the frontier, for the government of India,

[561] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. 51 p. 6.
[562] Ibid., 6.
[563] Ibid., sec. 51 p. 6.
[564] Ibid., sec. K.W. No. 2 p. 12.
[565] Ibid., 70.

evolved hand in hand with the clear territorial delimitation of tribal boundaries. In a conversation with Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan, Ridgeway pointed out that the object of the commission was 'to give Afghanistan a good natural frontier, which can be easily identified even if pillars, &c, be destroyed'.[566] Territorial claims were made on the basis of criteria that incorporated geographical, ethnographic and 'land rights' or what Durand called 'sovereign rights'.[567] For example, the nomadic tribes' 'grazing rights' would fall under this set of criteria.[568] Sovereign rights over land that came from historically proven occupation and use or other forms of ancient rights – all duly enquired during the surveying process – merged with the tribal criteria for land adjudication.[569] Where a stable presence could not be readily recognised, the British government implemented experimental forms of authority, through the mediation of the Afghans, to prove Kabul's territorial rights.

In the process of British-led engineering of Afghan sovereignty over Panjdeh and the adjacent areas, considerations about the position, character and long-term role of the tribes living in the area was carefully considered. British officers argued for the need to provide the amir with a manageable portion of land in which his authority could be surely exercised over what colonial officials often defined as unruly populations. As Rawlinson stated in August 1883:

> A still more important consideration, however, is raised by the condition of the tribes through whose territory the line of frontier would pass. If the line of demarcation were drawn east from Serakhs, or the immediate neighbourhood, it would assign to Afghanistan the [Turkoman] Salors on the Heri Rud, one half of the Saryks on the Murghab, and a large portion of the [nomadic] Ersari, belonging to the desert between the Murghab and the Oxus; and it is beyond dispute that the subjection to the jurisdiction to Herat of such intractable materials as these foreign outlying tribes would be a never-failing source of weakness, irritation, and danger. The fact is, that under the proposed Russian settlement the Amir of Kabul is threatened, not

[566] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 24.
[567] 'Nos. 318-449, Afghan Boundary Commission. Russian Forces. Kazi Sad-Ud-Din Khan's Attitude. Presents to Jamshidis at Bala Murgahb. Detention by the Afghans of Three Russian Troopers at Kara Tepe. The Jamshidis. Transport Facilities on the Persian Frontier. Correspondence between Russia and Afghanistan. Political Situation at Bala Murghab. The Taimanis and Hazara. Sardar Ishak Khan. Arrest by the Russians F a Turkoman Employé of the Mission. Explorations in Badghis and Panjdeh. Alleged Arrest of a Russian Survey Officer. Construction of Forts in the Murgahb Valley. Amir's Reference to the Will of Peter the Great. Bokhara Affairs. Raids by Kara Turkomans on Afghan Territory. Miscellaneous News-Reports', July 1886, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[568] 'Nos. 43-97, Afghan Boundary Commission. Russian Aggression. Negotiations with the Amir with a View of Arresting Them. The Proposed Zone of Operations and Line of Boundary', July 1885, sec. 45, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[569] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 4.

> with a loss of territory, but with having a greater extent of jurisdiction assigned to him than he desires or can adequately manage.[570]

For Rawlinson, as for Napier, drawing a boundary line on paper, based on geographical principles alone, was not enough because it could not assure the allegiance of the frontier populations to the government of Kabul. He argued that the 'three Uzbeg Chiefships of Maimena, Shibergan, and Andkhoi, which occupy the interval between the Murghab and the Oxus, [were at that time] with Bokhara rather than with Kabul' and needed to be brought into the orbit of Kabul if the amir's claims over the area were to be successful.[571] As Nancy Tapper notes, before the annexation Badghis and Gulran, Maimena, Afghan Turkestan were sparsely populated and much of the fertile agricultural land left unused. Famine, wars, epidemics as well as the 'Turkmen raids […] – Salurs, Sariqs, and Tereks coming from the west, and Qara Arsaris from the Oxus' – had diminished the overall population.[572] In the early 1880s, the inhabitants of the region were mainly 'Turkic-speaking Uzbeks and Persian-speaking Aimaqs, Arabs and Tajiks'. Among the nomad pastoralist groups she recounts a few Aimaq, Turkmen and Arab settlements.[573]

For the government of India the main problem lay in the fact that the whole area between the Heri Rud river and the Oxus was for the most part deserted country in which 'there is no trace of permanent habitation, nor any definite landmark, nor, except in the Murghab valley, any well, or watercourse, or even artificial cistern'.[574] Thus, British strategies wove together marks of permanent settlement, occupation and ethnological criteria. The occupation of Panjdeh and the extension of Kabul's rule over the Turkoman tribes were encouraged precisely in order to demonstrate the amir's right over this people and the entirety of the land they inhabited. For them, exclusive rights over land meant exclusive relations with the communities inhabiting those lands and *vice versa*. The case of the Turkomans disclosed the extent to which 'race' and 'tribe' became central criteria for boundary making. At the same time, it also showed that social engineering directed by the government of Kabul along the frontier, discussed in detail below, was triggered and influenced by colonial intervention.

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[570] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. 68.
[571] Ibid., sec. 68.
[572] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 56.
[573] Ibid.
[574] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. 68.

Patterns of colonial co-optation and collaboration in the making of the North-West Frontier: reviving experiments in indirect rule as a means of social engineering

The work of the Afghan Boundary Commission crucially questioned the forms of British influence over Afghan affairs. The stationing of British officers in the country did not solely engage them in their work as boundary commissioners and surveyors but closely entangled them with local elites, Afghan officials and tribal chiefs. British officials were allowed and even encouraged by the Indian government to have a direct stake on the development of the amir's policies on the ground. The complications arising out of Russia's occupation of Panjdeh in April 1885 for example compelled the officers to exercise more interference – in the form of 'advice' – on the local administration. On that occasion, British commissioners on the ground directly advised Afghan officers on the political and military moves to take. The interaction with local administrators also allowed British commissioners to have a role in the administrative settling of the areas that fell on the Afghan side of the border through the demarcation. At the same time, informal connections with governmental representatives were coupled with attempts at gaining the cooperation of local ethnic and religious minorities. Following a pattern experimented with already during the second Afghan war, these groups were similarly upheld as privileged local partners in the gathering of intelligence and the administrative settling of the area. As pointed out above, the strategies adopted by the British commissioners during the A.B.C. should be read within the broader framework of establishing influence through indirect means that dated back to at least the first Afghan war and which were then concretised to an unprecedented degree in the second conflict.

The political set-up initiated by the demarcation provided the British officers on the border with wider possibilities for direct interference in the local political establishment. As argued above, the presence of the A.B.C. compelled the amir to make active changes in the administrative organization of the area by appointing new figures and changing the responsibilities given to the administrators already in place. It was through these men – mainly the Afghan attaché to the A.B.C., Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan, general Ghaus-ud-din Khan, and the governor of Herat, Aminulla Khan – that the British authorities managed to forge links of cooperation with local elites and political figures. As had been the case during the second Afghan war, official policy was often disjoined from practice on the ground. It mixed statements of non-

interference with active intervention. The government of India maintained the pledge for non-interference by advising Ridgeway and the other officials on the frontier to 'advise' rather than 'press' decisions on the amir. However, while advice to the government of Kabul was carried out in softer terms, the indications given by British officers to the amir's representatives with the A.B.C. and the other Afghan administrators pointed to much more peremptory orders.[575] In fact, despite the communication the A.B.C. entertained with both the government of India and the Home Government, the British officers on the ground and their native assistants were left with large discretionary powers as to the application of the general instructions received. In addition, the means of communication – postal services to India through Herat and Meshed and the Persian telegraphic line – were difficult, slow and often interrupted. Therefore, most of the decision-making was largely devised *in situ* and increased the possibilities for British interference in administration-building along the frontier.

The local leverage given to the British commissioners directly affected the role of their native counterparts, who were allowed to have but a formal role in boundary making. The position of the Afghan agent with the A.B.C., Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan, was a matter of controversy and was passionately debated in the correspondence between the government of India and the amir. The main question arose about his participation and role in the Russo-British meetings on the border. In November 1885, when the actual demarcation started, it was agreed that the agent would be allowed to be present at the erection of the boundary pillars, and 'should be invited to attend our consultations when Commissioners agree that his advice and opinion are necessary and desirable'.[576] In the words of Ridgeway, the agent 'will be present when we mark the boundary […] I will consult him in all questions and give him copy of our protocols as work progresses, which he can forward to the Amir, who can then make any communication he wishes regarding the demarcation to [the] Viceroy of India'.[577] Ridgeway remarked that he had 'not thought it necessary to communicate the exact nature of the understanding arrived at to the Kazi or the Governor of Herat […] but they seem perfectly satisfied with the position accorded to

[575] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 852.
[576] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 16.
[577] Ibid., sec. 15.

them'.[578] The Afghan officials were thus only partially included in the decision making and allowed to participate in the Anglo-Russian meetings only as 'experts', not as active members.[579] The position of the Afghan agent remained controversial: in case of disagreement with the decisions reached by the British commissioners regarding the boundary he was unable to suspend any final arrangement until he had reached out for the amir's orders.[580] The amir in fact claimed the full 'status of a Commissioner' for his agent and his right to have an active say in boundary matters.[581] Ridgeway commented that he could not 'believe that His Highness can entertain such extravagant pretensions' and he suggested the government of India should warn him 'as to the serious consequences that must attend any direct interference by him with the Commission'.[582] The on the ground relation between British and Afghan boundary commissioners was a very unequal one, in which local representatives were sidelined as much as possible. The debate over the role of the Kazi showed that the government of India considered the demarcation of this border a matter not fully pertaining to Afghanistan's jurisdiction.

British interaction with the Afghan administrators was corroborated by a close connection forged with the non-Pashtun populations of the area. In the changing political context of north-eastern Afghanistan during the years of the demarcation, British officers were notably able to forge ties with local non-Pashtun, often Shia, communities – in particular Char Aimaks (Jamshidis, Firozkuhis) and the Sarik Turkomans. The British officers on the frontier, continuing practices that had been developed since the first Afghan war, fostered direct relations with these communities that by-passed the authority of the Afghan administrators appointed from Kabul. Similar to what has been argued in chapter two for the Hazara community, who acted as key British intermediaries during the Afghan war, in the long-term the status of these communities was concretely affected by their connection with the colonial power. The cooperation sought with these minorities aimed at maintaining more or less informal connections and influence over this frontier area beyond the presence of the A.B.C. on the ground. British authorities were aware of the implications these relations had in the communities' long-term relation with the government of Kabul.

[578] Ibid., sec. 21.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Ibid., sec. 15.
[581] Ibid., sec. 21.
[582] Ibid.

The government of India, and especially Ridgeway, maintained that the only possible means for ensuring that disturbances would not arise from the amir crushing on the Char Aimaks was 'the presence – after the demarcation is done – of British officers *who are allowed influence*' over the north-west of Afghanistan.[583]

The request for the stationing of British officers in Afghan territory had been first conveyed to the amir at the meeting in Rawalpindi in April 1885. The amir however, despite showing initial inclination to the idea, refused the proposal on the ground that it would have meant manifest British influence in his internal affairs, something ruled out by the two country's understanding. A member of the viceroy's council lamented that the amir 'would evidently rather run the risk of losing control over the tribes than retain control by the help of a British officer on the spot'.[584] In a telegram sent in May 1886 J.W. Ridgeway recalled the 'good service rendered [by Yalantush Khan] to Captain Yate's party after the Panjdeh fight.[585] The Turkomans had been used for example as couriers from Meshed to the frontier.[586] In June 1886, when the resettlement of the Sariks was already underway, he received a petition from Yalantush Khan's mother who vividly expressed the implications of the long-term relations between the Jamshidi tribe and the British authorities:

> We have been ruined three times on account of our attachment to the British Government. When Yar Muhammad Khan was ruler of Herat, he put us in prison for several years. After our release, we went to Khiva. After his death, we returned to this place. The second time the late Amin-ud-Dowla came from Kabul to Kandahar, and rendered service to the British officers. As soon as he arrived at Herat, Ayub Khan murdered him and plundered our property. Last year you were pleased to show favour to us at Panjdeh […] You are aware of everything and it rests with you.[587]

British accounts of the government of Kabul's crush on these tribes stressed the fact that 'those arrested [were] mostly our friends'.[588] The British officers on the frontier seemed to be aware of the fact that it had been their close connections with these tribes that contributed towards their arrest. In fact, it was suggested to the government

[583] 'Nos. 849-881', K.W. p. 1-2, 6 [Italics in original].
[584] Ibid., sec. K.W. p. 2.
[585] Ibid., sec. 874.
[586] Ridgeway, 'The New Afghan Frontier', 471.
[587] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 881.
[588] Ibid., sec. 879.

by one official that a 'substantial present' should be made to the mother of the chief before the mission left the country, 'in recognition of Yalantush Khan's services'.[589]

In the end however, comparable to the relations between the government of India and the Hazara community of Ghazni and Karabagh after 1880-81, the British considered it 'useless' to address the amir on the subject of the long-term protection of the Jamshidi chiefs. In fact, in September 1886 another council member remarked that 'it would be out of the question of course for us to plead for the man [Yalantush Khan], and though he may be killed, his property confiscated, and his family disgraced [by the amir], we could not "interfere".[590] In fact, as is detailed below, Yalantush Khan would ultimately be stripped of his political role and deported to Kabul as a political prisoner. The Turkomans as a group would also be directly affected by their collaboration with the British authorities and towards the end of the commission's works in 1886, many of these groups started to be displaced to the interior of the country by the government of Kabul.[591]

Interaction with local Afghan officials and tribal chiefs illustrated the degree to which British efforts at forging local cooperation subsumed attempts to build forms of indirect rule over the area. Maintaining British influence over north-western Afghanistan after the conclusion of the boundary commission was very much part of British goals and was openly advocated by the British commissioners. As pointed out above, influence was exercised at the local level, on Afghan administrators and minorities, rather than on the court of Kabul. In August 1883 Captain de Laessoe had argued that the question of Afghanistan's position towards Russia in the post-frontier settlement:

> would be to make the Amir refer constantly to India, and not merely in name shape his policy in accordance with the views of Government. It can hardly be doubted that this might be done and ultimately must be done, but the discussion of the means would here be out of place.[592]

The means of having the amir comply with British policies would be worked out on the field during the long permanence of the A.B.C. staff in north-western Afghanistan. Particularly, the British officers stationed at Panjdeh before the crisis had the chance to interact more closely with their Afghan counterparts.

[589] Ibid., sec. K.W. p. 8.
[590] Ibid. p. 8.
[591] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan'.
[592] 'Nos. 49-144', sec. K.W. p. 2 .

In December 1884, Ridgeway wrote to Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan that it was desirable that 'until the boundary is settled, there should be somebody near, acquainted with the international law of Europe, who can advise General Ghaus-ud-din Khan and Aminulla Khan, and dissuade the Russian officers should they propose any unfriendly action'.[593] He announced that some of the commissioner's staff would be left behind at Panjdeh until the boundary commission completed its works. The wealth of correspondence that passed between the British and these Afghan officers disclosed the leverage British officials were allowed to exercise in the local day-to-day decision making processes, showing that the 'advice' given by the British commissioners in matters of frontier settlement was very often followed by local administrators. They justified this interference by encompassing all administrative matters pertaining to the frontier settlement under the rubric of Afghanistan's 'foreign relations', over which British India had already established control since the amir's accession to the throne. The blurred relations British India entered into with Afghanistan in 1881, allowed for this understanding of foreign relations in the first place. The meaning of this category could be twisted precisely because the government of India strenuously avoided defining it clearly. In practice, it allowed British commissioners on the ground to overstep their jurisdiction of Afghanistan's actual external affairs and trespass into areas *de facto* pertaining to the polity's internal affairs.

British officials stationed along the north-west frontier of Afghanistan were actively attempting to concretise British paramountcy through the forging of alliances and the increasing degrees of leverage over Afghan administrators. While the commission aimed to demarcate the border and prevent Russian territorial advances, British officials on the ground sought to devise a strategy to make inroads for the maintenance of an active role for the government of India in the area beyond the A.B.C. The repeated attempts to maintain a physical British presence along Afghanistan's frontiers were turned down by the amir, but continued to be repeated over and over again throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Nonetheless, British officers became key architects in Afghan state-building, thus again questioning the boundary between 'colonial' and 'imperial' intervention. British 'advice' on boundary matters, falling within the rubric of 'foreign relations', ultimately impinged on the way the

[593] 'Nos. 187-326A', sec. 203.

administration was settled in the territories added to Kabul's jurisdiction. In the longer term, it influenced the location of tribal settlements along the border and the resettlement of local non-Pashtun communities.

The kind of interference exercised by the British officers in local politics significantly impinged upon existing political hierarchies. The administrators appointed by the government of Kabul perceived British relations with the Jamshidi chiefs as encroaching upon existing authority and hierarchy. Drawing on governance practices experimented with during the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar in 1879-1880, in Panjdeh and in Bala Murghab British officials engaged in the creation of networks of intelligence, cooperation and patronage. Frederick Roberts in Kabul had used khilluts as means of securing the loyalty of tribal chiefs and native elites. The A.B.C. again employed khilluts in relation to the Turkoman tribes of Panjdeh and the Jamshidis. Lumsden, who in the month of October 1884 was stationed in the area, acted as mediator between the amir and the Turkomans. Eager to secure the permanent settlement of this population in Panjdeh, he worked on behalf of the government of Kabul towards securing the continued loyalty of the Sariks to the amir. Lumsden notably wrote to the amir:

> I have further lost no opportunity of urging on the Sarukhs the necessity of being loyal subjects to Your Highness, and of explaining the advantages which would accrue to them therefrom. I have also ventured to give such men of position amongst them, as have been presented to me as well-wishers of Your Highness's Government, a few trifling presents as a token of my good-will towards them, and to demonstrate the identity of interest and the friendship existing between the two Governments.[594]

British officers' interference in local politics often overstepped what the Afghan officers considered appropriate behaviour. It seems that the governor of Herat and the Kazi were notably concerned that too much interference on the part of the commission's members on the government of Kabul's relation with the tribes could seriously endanger the political loyalty of the latters.

In December 1884, the two Afghan administrators addressed Lumsden:

> Now we beg to state that the Turkomans have no Chief. Every person is his own Chief. If the soil and the territory belong to us, then there appears to be no use in giving presents and khilats to the subjects (rayats). If they belong to some one else, then what advantage can be derived from giving khilats. The Sariks have always been subjects to the Herat Government and have been

[594] Ibid., sec. 188.

> paying revenue to it, and our Governor has been sitting among them. To give khilats to the Sariks will cause disappointment to the other tribes, and will cause them to entertain remote ideas in their mind. It is better not to give khilats.[595]

This message stressed the different understanding the two parties entertained of tribal structures among the Turkoman tribes. While local understandings pointed to tribal structures devoid of strong elements of leadership, the colonial officials sought to establish those leaderships. Khilluts, as shown in chapter two, was not a neutral gesture but implied the establishment of a political connection and hierarchy. Significantly, the two Afghan officers were questioning the role khilluts had in making the tribes 'entertain remote ideas', such as rebelling against the government of Herat, with which they had long entertained suzerain relations. The giving of khilluts by these foreign officers was interpreted by local authorities as an encroachment upon their own authority, entailing the possibility of new and alternative loyalties. The effects of British practice in this sense seemed to be the disruption of the local political balance by the creation of direct relations of authority with the tribes, thus bypassing the Afghan officials in charge of the district.

The A.B.C. drew on the strategies experimented with during the war. During the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar loyalties were forged by direct interference in the relation between the central government and tribal leaderships. Indeed, the interposition of British authority into the established political networks had encouraged some communities and political figures to cooperate with the foreign occupation. At the same time, British strategies also contributed to unite those factions who were losing their privileges and status through armed rebellion against the British. British interference in local politics underpinned the Afghan rationale of appointing and dismissing local tribal chiefs, such as Yalantush Khan.[596] In the Maimena and Murghab regions, the British sought the cooperation of local representatives. In the long term, this had the effect of overstepping the authority held by local Afghan administrators.

Tribe' and 'race' as criteria for internal state-building: The Pashtun colonization of the north-west and the resettlement of the non-Pashtun populations

[595] Ibid., sec. 209.
[596] Ibid., sec. 260.

The value of the introduction of ideas of undivided sovereignty into the Afghan context through the work of the A.B.C. went beyond changing the government of Kabul's perception of its territorial 'dependencies'. The merging of the principle of 'ethnological continuity' with ideas of sovereignty and territoriality introduced a new rationale into internal state-building that had a long term impact on the Afghan sociological landscape. Ethnology and sovereignty both informed British-led boundary drawing. British officials worked in collaboration with local Afghan administrators. In the long term, they influenced the way the government of Kabul used sociological categories, understood as ethnological differences, in the social re-drawing of this frontier area after the Commission had left the country. When an agreement was reached on the boundary at Panjdeh in October 1885 the amir wrote to the viceroy that:

> By the agreement of the two powers, and with my assent, it is settled that the Russian outpost be in Panjdeh limits, and the Afghan outposts in the lands of Maruchak (i.e. including the left bank of the river) […] I have also understood that in the delimitation of the boundary between the Murghab and the Oxus, the following principles will be observed, viz. that lands under cultivation of Turkomans who are Russian subjects, and their pastures, will remain Russian, while lands cultivated by Afghan subjects will stay within Afghan limits. After the matter had been decided by the Ministers of the two great powers and had been settled and agreed upon, I accepted these principles by the friendly advice of the British Government.[597]

Following the Panjdeh crisis, the allocation of land on the basis of tribal affiliation seemed to have been adopted as a criterion by the government of Kabul. The amir acknowledged that this principle, together with the principle of land use, had been the key criteria for land adjudication during the demarcation. At the same time, he also acknowledged that these principles were set by the government of India, whose directions he had agreed to follow.

At the end of November 1885 the amir further addressed the viceroy on the matter of the boundary dividing Maruchak from Panjdeh. In this correspondence, he acknowledged that the boundary agreed upon 'will be fixed in such a manner that all the land cultivated by the Saruk and their pasture-grounds shall be left to the Russians, so that they may not claim all the lands on the South of the Murghab from the ruins of the Maruchak bridge as far as Band-i-Nadir, as belonging to them'. Abdur Rahman, in his address, felt the need to specify the differences among the Sarikhs:

[597] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 23.

> I write to warn Your Excellency that by the Russian Saruks are meant the Panjdeh Saruks only and not all the Saruks, for in the case in which the latter are meant, Maruchak itself, nay even Karawal-Khana, Sakhli Oulia and Kala-i-Wali shall also become Russian possessions, since the lands of those places are also tilled by the Saruks; but this is evidently at variance with what is stated in the agreement (viz) that Maruchak is included in Afghanistan. Therefore it is evident that by the Saruks in the agreement are meant the Saruks of Panjdeh only; whereas the Turkomans, who are settled opposite to Maruchak to the south of the river, are not called the Panjdeh Turkomans but the Saruks of Maruchak.[598]

The amir insisted that a distinction must be made among the different sections of the Sarik Turkomans. He argued for the need to distinguish the Sariks of Panjdeh from the Sariks of Maruchak, the latter of which should remain under the government of Afghanistan.[599] He wrote that the 'Sarikhs of Panjdeh with their cultivations and pasture grounds should be dependents of the Russian Government and the Sariks of Maruchak, on account of their vicinity to and connection with Afghanistan, should be dependents of Afghanistan, and should remain in possession of their cultivations and pasturages'.

In view of the agreement reached on this portion of the border, the amir argued that Russia was not allowed to 'claim all the Sariks in general' as this would cause the Sariks of Panjdeh to be 'mixed up' with the Sariks of Maruchak and 'the lands of the two' would similarly be confounded. He notably pointed out that 'if no distinction is made between the Sariks of Panjdeh and the Sariks of Meruchak, difficulties will arise in the delimitation of the frontier'.[600] By the end stages of the demarcation the amir seemed to have picked up a rationale comparable to the considerations around tribal difference and territory that had informed British advice to him and his representatives on the ground. The idea of claiming exclusive ownership over one portion of territory inhabited by one particular section of a tribe was becoming a part of the government of Kabul's argument for the arrangement of lands along the new frontier. 'Ethnological continuity', the principle that had formed the backbone of Anglo-Russian boundary making was being acknowledged by the amir as the basis not only for the demarcation itself, but also for the subsequent settlement of the frontier areas.

[598] Ibid., sec. 26.
[599] Ibid., sec. 72.
[600] Ibid., sec. 52.

In the correspondence between the governments of Kabul and British India the settlement of the newly drawn frontier became a matter of contestation. The resettlement of the Sariks had left a tract of land, now facing the frontier to Russia, with virtually very little population. The government of India suggested to the government of Kabul to leave this tract as a no-man's land between his possessions and Russia. In December 1885 an agreement was reached between Britain and Russia that gave to the government of Kabul, in the words of Ridgeway, authority over 'large tracts of fertile land in Badghis for which [the amir] has no cultivators'. He commented in January 1886 to the amir on the advantages this frontier would bring to the government of Kabul. He argued that this was:

> A good natural frontier which includes nearly all the cultivable lands of Badghis, and it is a frontier which can always be kept separate and apart from the Russian frontier if Your Highness should decide to leave uncultivated a zone of the land which has been hitherto cultivated by the Sariks of Panjdeh, but which they have been obliged to give up to Your Highness by this settlement.[601]

The new Russo-Afghan frontier was laid down from Zulficar to Maruchak and left an 'uninhabited "chul" on each side of it except where it is traversed by the rivers Kushan, Kashan, and Murghab'. He argued that, since on each side of these rivers there was 'a narrow strip of land hitherto cultivated by the Sariks of Panjdeh, which joins the cultivation of the Jemshidis and Hazaras with that of the Sariks', the amir should give orders that 'a small interval on the rivers, adjoining the Russian frontier, should be left uncultivated and uninhabited except by Your Highness's outposts'.[602] On this point, Ridgeway also pointed out that a strip of land should be left between the Pashtun settlements and the frontier because, 'should the Afghan element be allowed to cultivate up to the very frontier, there will certainly be collisions between them and the Sariks, and this will be quite as dangerous to the peace and independence of Afghanistan as the intrigues between the Jamshidis and Russians which His Highness hopes to prevent'.[603] Ridgeway pointed out that this no-man's land would 'prevent contact and collision between [the amir's] subjects and the Russian subjects' and that it should be 'only occupied by [the amir's] faithful troops'.[604] The government of India envisioned the establishment of a militarised

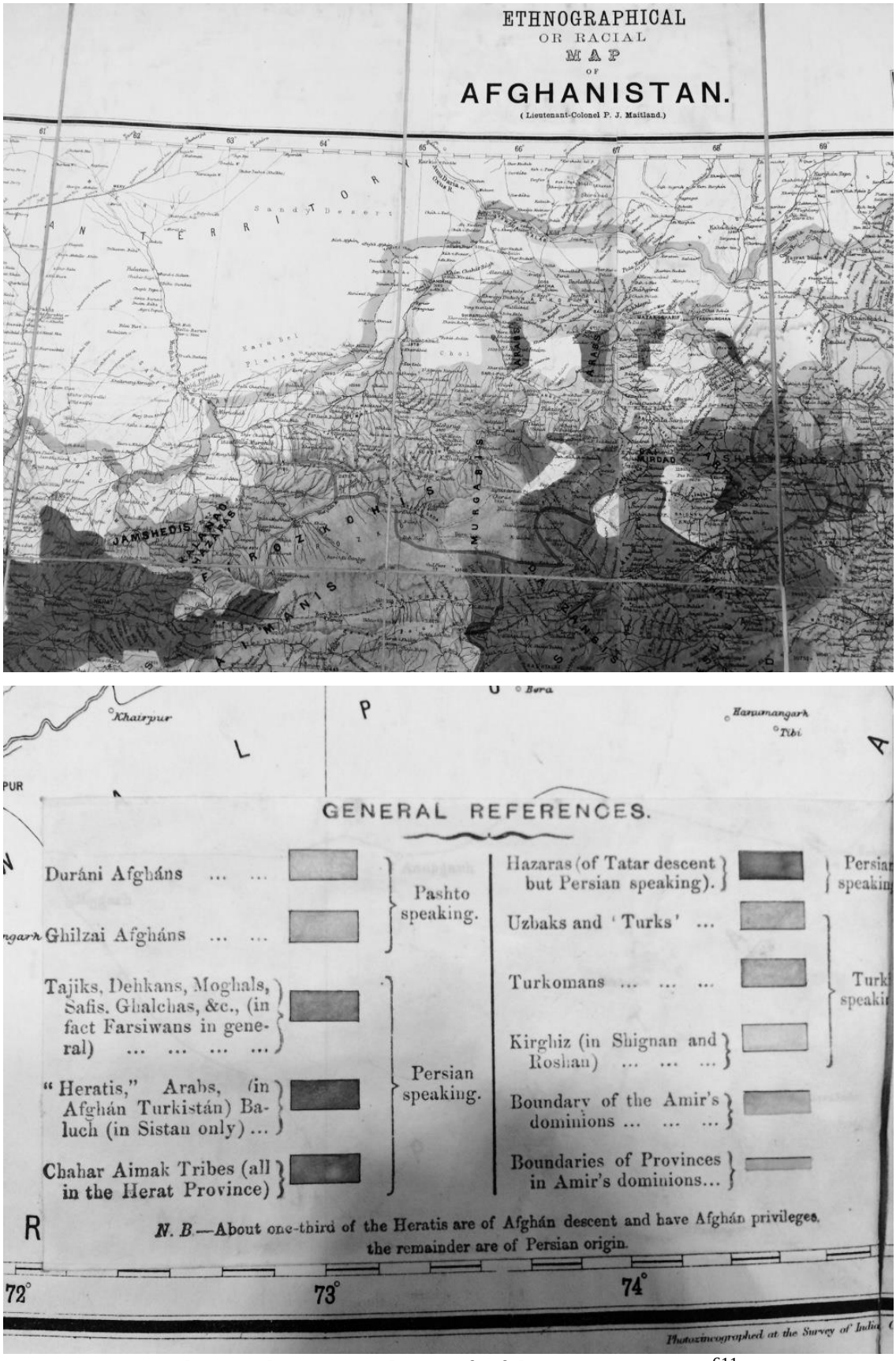
[601] Ibid., sec. 54.
[602] Ibid., sec. 139.
[603] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 864.
[604] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 139.

frontier devoid of actual settlements which could directly interact with their Russian counterparts. However, the amir had different plans.

Territorial *cum* ethnological criteria became relevant in the practical settlement of the frontier directed by the government of Kabul. In May 1885 the British and Russian governments finally reached an agreement as to the location of the point of frontier due to separate the lands of Panjdeh from Maruchak. Shortly after, Ridgeway suggested that 'the precise points on the Murghab should be unconditionally fixed, and all Sariks within the Afghan frontier deported'.[605] The advice given by the commissioner was carried out by the government of Kabul. In February 1886 the amir directed his officials that 'Turkomans should not be allowed to remain' in Maruchak, but that they 'were at liberty to either go to Panjdeh, to Herat or to Turkistan'.[606] Nancy Tapper points out that Abdur Rahman's earlier attempts at settling the north-west had seen the creation of colonies of Jamshidi, Hazara, Firuzkhui and Sarik Turkoman agriculturalists around Bala Murghab.[607] In 1886 however, the Turkoman tribes were considered to fall under the sovereignty of the Russian authorities, who had been in charge of Panjdeh since April 1885, and were thus excluded from the settlement programmes. Ridgeway played a leading role in their re-settlement, assuming charge of 'arranging with unhesitating consent of [the] Afghan authorities for their immediate emigration'.[608]

By March 1886 the British commissioner reported that 'the removal of Sariks from Kila Wali is practically finished'.[609] By April of the same year, 'of the 360 Sarik families residing at Kila Wali, all have migrated to Panjdeh with the exception of fifteen, which have preferred to become Afghan subjects and to move, some to Akcha in Afghan Turkistan, and the others to Charshamba and Hirak, villages on the road to Maimena'.[610] The interaction between the boundary commission and

[605] Ibid., sec. 72.
[606] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 858.
[607] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 58.
[608] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 855.
[609] Ibid., sec. 859.
[610] Ibid., sec. 864.



Ethnographic or Racial map of Afghanistan (ca. 1900)[611]

the Afghan officials concretised the merging of territoriality with tribal criteria and their application to the demarcation of the frontier. Colonial ideas of ethnological difference and territorial continuity of the tribes on the border were first worked into the Anglo-Afghan collaboration on the resettlement of the Sarik Turkomans following the Panjdeh incident in April 1885. These very criteria were subsequently employed by the government of Kabul and the local authorities in the settlement of the frontier along the lines of ethnic difference. As pointed out above, for the British, it was the undefined nature of the current northern Afghan frontier that was understood to provide the space for further Russian advances. On the ground however, this same undefined border allowed the government of Kabul, under the advice of British India, to establish its authority over new areas. In the long run, the practice of resettling entire communities from Afghanistan's borders – Turkestan, the north-western border, but also Hazarajat – and their replacement with Pashtun groups became an integral part of the government of Kabul's extension of authority over new areas.

While the resettlement of the Sarik Turkomans was being planned for in the late summer of 1885, arguments started to be ventilated within the Afghan administration about the role and geographical location of the other non-Pashtun populations inhabiting the frontier. In September 1885 the suggestion was first made for the resettlement of these populations away from the frontier line to other localities in the interior of Afghanistan. It is not completely clear from which quarter this idea first came, but it is significant that the local administrators in Herat and Bala Murghab – the same personalities that had led the Sarik resettlement – played a primary role. The governor of Herat, Aminulla Khan, and Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan, the Afghan attaché to the commission, wrote to the amir 'advising the deposition and detention of all the present Jamshidi, Hazara, and Firozkuhi Chiefs, replacing them by Afghan officials'.[612] In the same period, Ridgeway reported that there were first 'indications' of the amir intending to crush on the Aimaks on completion of the demarcation, and in fact, in the following summer the governor of Herat started raising an escort of 2,500 cavalry 'in order to overawe [the] Jamshidis, who after the demarcation will be removed from Bala Murghab and replaced by Afghan nomads already collected'.[613]As ethnological consideration started to play an increasingly central role

[611] 'IOR/W/L/PS/21/H17, Tribal Map of Afghanistan'.
[612] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 850.
[613] Ibid.

in the debate within the government of India – both at the centre and among local officials – the social landscape was being reshaped by polices of ethnic difference: communities' right to inhabit a certain geographical space was determined by their ethnic affiliation and, as will be seen below, by their relation to the government of Kabul.

The amir proceeded to the settlement of the frontier areas left virtually 'empty' by the re-settlement of the Char Aimaks into the interior of Afghanistan and by the moving of the Sarik Turkomans to Russian territory. Abdur Rahman pointed out that he would not:

> allow the country which has fallen into the share of Afghanistan to remain without troops and people, and I propose to settle a large number of Afghan families in those lands. No doubt the inhabitants will be in need to cultivate and produce. If the lands remain uncultivated, the inhabitants will find it difficult to live; and if Afghan families are not settled there, then the foundation of the frontier policy will be weak and unstable.[614]

The amir was planning a settlement of the newly created frontier with Pashtun families who could guarantee the security and defence of the area against foreign intervention. In this sense, the amir's frontier policy followed the policy devised by the government of India for securing its imperial frontier, which was understood to be the Maimena boundary as chapter four will show. In 1886 the government of Kabul started a vast re-settlement programme of Pashtun families from the southern Afghan regions to the north-west. These were 'Afghan tribes' from Kandahar, 'Pusht-i-Rud, Zamindawar, and cattle owners of Herat' – in the intention of the amir these ought to be mostly Durrani families.[615] These people were – sometimes voluntarily and sometimes under compulsion – moved to this region in order to establish agricultural and semi-nomadic settlements.[616] After the migration of the Sariks, Ridgeway was informed by 'the Governor of Herat that the Amir has directed that Kila Wali be now occupied by 300 families of the Achakzai tribe, Afghan subjects from Zamindawar'. In fact, he remarked, 'it is the amir's policy to fringe the frontier with Afghan colonies, in order to prevent the contact of the Aimaks, especially the Jamshidis, with the Russians'.[617] The policy pursued by the government of Kabul in redrawing the

[614] 'Nos. 1-195', sec. 174.
[615] 'Nos. 849-881', secs 865, 867; Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 67.
[616] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan'.
[617] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 864.

ethnographical boundaries of the region was heavily informed by the geography the frontier demarcation had created. In the decision to resettle non-Pashtun populations and replace them with Pashtun – preferably Durrani – settlers consideration about security of the frontier and loyalty to the government merged together. In the long period, this became a central characteristic of Abdur Rahman's state-building.[618] At the level of local administration, these policies had contributed to redefining the internal structure of local tribes and their relations to the central government.

The settlement of the frontier along ethnic lines had an important impact on the reform of local administrations. The Afghan government started to be concerned with overlapping structures of power and pointed towards the introduction of more linear hierarchies. In comparison, earlier attempts by the amirs of Kabul to bring the north-west, including Maimena, under its government had been less successful. In fact, when Dost Muhammad Khan sought to annex Turkestan, Kataghan and Badakhshan during the 1850s, Maimena was able to resist Afghan invasion.[619] Shere Ali was more successful but actual control of the area was always short-lived. The form of administration arranged after the annexation of new areas was scarcely intrusive into local political structures. In the early 1850s, the governors appointed by the amir did not implement outright interference in an attempt to avoid antagonising the local chiefs. Dost Muhammad Khan used local leaders to build his own administration, rather than introducing figures foreign to the local political landscape.[620] Contrary to the strategies pursued in 1884-7, this led to less intrusion into local tribal hierarchies. The government of Kabul never exerted close control over the newly-annexed areas. In fact, the governor Dost Muhammad Khan appointed in Turkestan could carve out for himself a significant degree of independence from Kabul, which did not direct the policies applied by the governors.[621] The administration the governor appointed by Abdur Rahman and the British commissioners arranged in Maimena in the mid-1880s discontinued the strategies employed by former rulers in the extension of their authority in the areas north of the Hindu Kush. Now, direct interference in local leaderships was used by the government of Kabul to attain closer control over the area.

[618] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*.
[619] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 101.
[620] Ibid., 91.
[621] Ibid., 102.

In early 1885 the governor of Herat appointed general Ghaus-ud-din Khan to Bala Murghab. He objected that 'there should not be two Hakims at Bala Murghab', which was then under the authority of Aminulla Khan, brother of Yalantush Khan, the Jamshidi chief. A cousin of Yalantush Khan, Muhammad Wali Khan, was governing Kushk jointly with one of Yalantush's sons. Thus, two of the most important positions along the Kushk-Murghab frontier were under the control of Jamshidi chiefs.[622] The Afghan authorities, having acquired this territory through the border settlement, were now concerned about the duality of authority and the possibility that, notwithstanding the border, the Jamshidis could eventually trigger Russian interference in the north-west. The governor of Herat decided therefore to escort Aminulla Khan to Herat, where he would be handed over to the Sipah Salar Faramuz Khan, the commander in chief of the amir's army. Muhammad Wali Khan was similarly sent to Herat. British reports suggest that Yalantush Khan, Aminulla Khan and Muhammad Wali Khan were eventually arrested in Herat and sent to Kabul, and their families had been directed to go with their household goods from Kushk and Bala Murghab to Herat'.[623] Bala Murghab and Kushk, once the Jamshidi leadership had been ousted, underwent a process of resettlement similar to that of the Sariks from Kila Wali. The Jamshidis were initially moved by the governor of Herat to the vicinity of that city and later to Kabul together with the Firozkuhis.

The decimation of the local leadership led to a redefinition of administrative functions in the region. While Jamshidi and Firozkuhi chiefs were purged, the colonisation by Pashtun migrants from the South led to new political leaderships entering the scene. Crucially, general Ghaus-ud-din Khan became responsible for assigning lands and villages to the settlers', and was afterwards 'given direct administrative control of the Jamshidis of Kushk, the Hazaras of Qal'a-I Nau, the Firuzkuhis, and the Pashtun nomads'.[624] The colonisation of border areas by Pashtun settlers was replicated in Turkestan, demarcated by a British-led commission in 1888-9 and thereupon annexed by the amir, and in north-eastern Afghanistan in the 1890s.[625] Thus, in the settlement of the north-west, the ethnological rationale seems to have worked at two levels. On the one hand, it let to the replacement of the

[622] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 865.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 66.
[625] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 105; Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 71.

populations living in the area with Pashtun settlers. On the other, local leadership, until then made up by the chiefs of the non-Pashtun tribes, was substituted with 'Afghan officials'.[626]

The chiefs of the Pashtun groups that arrived in the north-west as settlers assumed primary roles in the administration of this area. They played a central role in turning Gulran, Badghis and later Maimena into new districts of the Afghan state. After the removal of Muhammad Wali Khan as *hakim* of Kushk, 'Rasul Khan, the chief Khan of the Nurzais' was appointed in his stead.[627] Similarly, in early 1887 'Qazi Jan Muhammad of the Babakzai Ishaqzai was appointed *qadi* to the newcomers, while Taju Khan Khanikhel Ishaqzai [became] *hakim*, assisted by Mir Afzal Khan, chief of the Nurzais, as *na'ib*'.[628] The Ishaqzai, Nurzai and Achakzai were Durrani tribes from the southern provinces and represented a considerable portion of the total colony. At the same time, the government redefined Jamshidi tribal leadership. With Yalantush Khan, the principal chief of the tribe, under arrest in Kabul, 'Haidar Kuli Khan, son of Khan Agha (brother of Yalantush Khan), who [was] opposed to Yalantush Khan, [was] appointed as headman and leader of the Jamshidis'.[629] Thus, not only were the leading tribal chiefs placed under arrest, but, as the governor of Herat confirmed, 'certain other relations of Yalantush Khan had also been made prisoners at Kushk' and transferred to Kabul.[630]

A very similar development can be determined with reference to the Firozkuhi tribe, whose headman, Fattehullah Beg, was being detained at Kabul on the amir's orders. Shortly after his death, in April 1886 'one hundred cavalry sowars [were] detailed to turn out from Kadas the families of the Zai Hakim Firozkuhis, who are relatives of Fatteullah Beg' and 'several members of [his] family' were arrested by 'the Herat authorities'.[631] They were notably accused of being connected with Yalantush Khan.[632] In May 1886 the government of Kabul sent Faiz Muhammad Khan, commandant of the Afghan troops at Bala Murghab, to the Firozkuhi country to remove Fathulla Beg's clan from there to the Herat valley.[633] As would be the case in

[626] 'Nos. 849-881'., 850
[627] Ibid., sec. 865.
[628] Tapper, 'The Advent of Pashtūn "Māldārs" in North-Western Afghanistan', 66.
[629] 'Nos. 849-881', sec. 865.
[630] Ibid., sec. 867.
[631] Ibid., secs 865, 874.
[632] Ibid., sec. 865.
[633] Ibid., sec. 875.

the 1892-3 annexation of Hazarajat, the government of Kabul encroached on local tribal headmen, curtailing their powers and transferring them to Kabul. Their imprisonment was often disguised in the form of official invitations on the part of the amir.[634]

One of the goals of this restructuring of tribal leaderships was the curtailment of the tribal leaders' family ties, which would have allowed their faction a new pledge for leadership in the future. Significantly, Faiz Muhammad Khan, along with the removal of Fatehulla Beg's relations to Herat, also 'brought with him Karar Beg, the brother, and two other relatives of Fathulla Beg. One of the sons of Fathulla Beg has been arrested at Herat and his other son has made his escape from the Firozkuhi country'.[635] The substitution of local tribal leaders with Pashtuns was similarly extended to the Sunni Hazaras of Kila Nau. In May 1886 J.W. Ridgeway reported to the foreign secretary that 'the Hazara chief of Killa Nau has been now arrested and replaced by an Afghan. This will cause great discontent among the Aimaks'.[636] In a further telegram to the foreign secretary, Earl of Rosebery, he pointed out that the amir was 'arresting and deposing all the principal Aimak Chiefs, including those who were friendly to us.[637] In June 1886 the Taimani chief, Ambia Khan, was arrested and 'many other arrests [were] said to be imminent'.[638]

The Hazaras were also undergoing a process of marginalisation. Similar to the Firozkuhis and Jamshidis, their leaders were being sidelined by the representatives of the government of Kabul. The developments at the local level of the administration showed the degree to which the government of Kabul intervened in the north-western frontier region. The amir's reform worked towards creating loyal settlements of stable agriculturalists, who would stand as privileged partners of the government along its frontiers. The reform of the administration following the A.B.C. forged new forms of local hierarchy, which tried to eradicate the authority of the non-Pashtun tribes. Their leaders were removed and substituted by minor branches of their communities. The influx of Pashtun settlers added a final tassel to the redrawing of the region along ethnic lines.

[634] Ibid., sec. 869.
[635] Ibid., sec. 875.
[636] Ibid., sec. 877.
[637] Ibid., sec. 878.
[638] Ibid., sec. 879.

Conclusion

The boundary commission of 1884-7 enabled the extension of the government of Kabul's authority over Gulran, Badghis and Maimana. However, while previous to 1884 relations with these regions had been loose and intermittent, the demarcation of the border changed Kabul's relations with this area. The boundary making brought more stable connections and a more permanent presence of the government of Kabul in the region. The reform of existing administrative structures wove the concepts of sovereignty and territoriality into the transformation of the north-west into a province of Afghanistan. Overlapping suzerain relations, multiple centres of authority were dismantled in favour of Kabul's undivided authority and exclusive territorial control. British 'advice' and direction of the policies pursued by Afghan administrators were central in effecting local administrative reform. British officials entangled their work as boundary commissioners within the local political dimension, leading to different forms and layers of colonial control and influence. At the local level, British intervention contributed to the establishment of new hierarchies, which often challenged existing political structures.

This chapter suggests that there was a relationship between colonial ideas of tribes and the government of Kabul's plan for the settlement of the frontier. The relations between Kabul, the government of India, British officers on the frontier and their Afghan counterparts disclose a complex web of negotiations, misunderstandings and resistance on the part of the Afghan side to different degrees of British interference. As will be seen in chapter four, Anglo-Afghan relations in these years constantly redefined the meaning of British 'advice'. The two governments constantly negotiated the degree of British interference in Kabul's internal affairs allowed for by the amir and pushed for by the government of India. The A.B.C. is no exception and displayed how this interference – at the basis of British attempts at indirect rule in these years – was constantly re-negotiated with the amir and with local Afghan administrators and tribal chiefs. This boundary commission showed that there was a significant local dimension to the Great Game narrative that went beyond the alleged fear of Russia's expansion and British and geopolitical considerations. On the contrary, it determined the degree of British interference in Afghanistan and permanently affected Afghan state-building.

Chapter four

The imperial frontier of the empire: engineering British India's expansion through the making of the Durand Line, 1893-1897

By the 1890s the Afghan polity was starting to assume more definite territorial contours. The demarcation of the Maimena border in the mid-1880s, analysed in chapter three, and of the northern Oxus boundary, which continued in the 1890s, advanced the government of Kabul's territorial configuration. Internally, the amir was progressively consolidating his position as ruler of an expanding polity and was including the areas assigned to Afghanistan through colonial boundary making into the government's reach and administration.[639] Between 1893 and 1896 what is generally considered as the 'Indo-Afghan frontier', dividing Afghanistan and British India, was laid down.[640] In November 1893 the government of India sent Henry Mortimer Durand, then foreign secretary to the government of India, to Kabul on a political mission in order to negotiate two boundary settlements with the amir: one concerning the eastern portion of the Oxus river and the other concerning south-eastern Afghanistan, what would be known as the Durand line.[641] The two governments agreed on a strip of land to be the zone within which the boundary line was to be physically delineated after further exploration and land surveying. The actual demarcation, which elicited endless controversy as it cut across tribal communities, terminated in 1896 but left two major points of contestation undefined: a portion of the Chitral border and another tract in the Mohmand country north of Dakka, which would be settled only in subsequent decades.[642]

The settlement of the Durand line continued British India's century-long expansion into the north-west. In 1849 the East India Company had annexed the Punjab to its territories and taken possession of Peshawar, which was made into an

[639] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 134; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*; Dupree, *Afghanistan*.
[640] *Gazetteer of Afghanistan Compiled in the Division of the Chief of Staff/General Staff India Calcutta/Simla*, 1910, i.
[641] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 178.
[642] Bijan Omrani and Frank Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 5 (1 October 2009): 50; Bijan Omrani, 'The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan-Pakistan Border', *Asian Affairs* 40, no. 2 (1 July 2009): 185.

administrative district under the the Punjab government located at Lahore.[643] The new frontier thus created was divided into six districts: Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan.[644] In the 1850-60s, some of these districts, particularly Peshawar, were still regarded by the amir Dost Muhammad Khan as belonging to Afghanistan. Peshawar had been lost to the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh in 1834, while Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan had been part of the early nineteenth century Sadozai kingdom.[645] At the same time, British military expeditions in the years following the end of the first Afghan war (1838-42), albeit defined in terms of 'masterly inactivity', made continuous inroads into the tribal areas that lay beyond the administered frontier districts of the Punjab and which were politically connected to the government of Kabul. Between 1849 and the mid-1890s the Punjab Irregular Force (later renamed Punjab Frontier Force), under the direct command of the Punjab administration, engaged in almost yearly military expeditions along the whole length of the frontier, from Hunza and Chitral in the north to Swat, Waziristan and south into Baluchistan's northern edge.[646] During the second Afghan war, the government of India occupied the Khyber pass, Kurram, Khost (later returned to Afghanistan), Pishin and Sibi, which were the 'assigned districts' the 1879 treaty of Gandamak *de facto* annexed to British India, as seen in chapter two.[647] In the years following the war, as will be detailed below, the government of India used the outposts of the Khyber and Chaman, located north-west of Quetta, as political and military bridgeheads to further expand British influence into the territories claimed by the amir of Kabul. In 1904 the viceroy Nathaniel Curzon created the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), thus singling out this portion from the Tribal Territories (FATA), which were not formally considered part of British India and have continued to maintain a separate administration until this day.[648]

The demarcation of the border between British India and Afghanistan prompted a debate within the government of India that drew on a rationale that was different from the one that had accompanied the demarcation of Afghanistan's north-

[643] Michael Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier: British India and Afghanistan: A Pictorial History, 1839-1947* (Poole, Dorset: New York, N.Y.: Blandford Press, 1982), 49; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 184.
[644] Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, 49.
[645] Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 111–12; Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan*, 71; Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 12, 268.
[646] Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, 52–53, 178.
[647] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*, 322.
[648] Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', 50.

western border in 1884-7. While both instances of colonial boundary making interrogated the amir's subordinate position *vis-à-vis* British India, they did so through different rubrics. On the one hand, the demarcation of Afghanistan's 'external' frontiers towards Russian Central Asia evoked arguments about the amir's obligation to recognise British paramountcy in the domain of 'foreign relations', as seen in chapter three with reference to the Maimena boundary. On the other, the settlement of the so-called Durand line did not draw on this rubric but insisted on Afghanistan's place within the British Indian empire. Chapter three showed how colonial boundary making at the very 'fringe' of the empire represented a concrete attempt to create 'empire' beyond British India's directly administered or controlled territories. This chapter again engages the question of empire-building, but from a different angle. It argues that the Durand line was never seen as British India's imperial frontier, which by 1893 had been extended as far as the Oxus, but as a regional or internal border. It did not delimit sovereign polities but different layers of imperial and native sovereignty, narrowly portrayed as 'spheres of influence' in the boundary agreement.[649] As such, it became a site of future potential expansion into Afghanistan rather than an instrument of defence from Russian encroachments.

The delimitation of the Durand line replicated the highly blurred and undefined approach to Afghanistan that had characterised the government of India's Afghanistan policies at least since the 1870s. In fact, it is argued, it was the colonial state's conscious application of blurred ideas of sovereignty that allowed it to engineer this space as a site of empire building. For British India, the delimitation of the Durand line became a reluctant exercise of defining British India's relations with Afghanistan, which aimed at maintaining the blurred relations that had characterised British relations with this polity for the preceding decades as long as possible. These episodes of colonial boundary making distinguished two different ideas of sovereignty: in Maimena and along the Oxus, British India tried to implement a modern notion of sovereignty that divided clear-cut territorial spheres between Russia and Afghanistan, while trying to engineer colonial influence within the local administration. On the Durand line the colonial state played, and was very comfortable, with highly blurred notions of sovereignty that eluded any conception of modern nation state. The goal of British India's boundary-making in the tribal

[649] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Vol. XI*.

territories was aimed at maintaining the conditions that allowed the government of India to further expand its influence into the tribal areas, virtually curtailed from the reach of the government of Kabul by the Durand line. In the years that followed the demarcation, British India attempted to push its border into Afghanistan, thus continuing the advancement of its frontiers into the north-west.

The literature on British India's north-western frontier is extensive but has often been limited to certain recurring themes. While older histories largely focused on the geopolitical and diplomatic dimension of British-led drawing of Afghanistan's boundaries, in more recent times historians have been engaged with what has been called 'frontier governmentality'.[650] They have analysed the different strategies British officials employed in controlling, policing and punishing the tribes along the Afghan border, focusing on the impact of what were veritable systems of tribal governance, such as the so-called Sandeman system, on the tribes' political structures, their economies and ways of life.[651] The Durand boundary has found a place in this literature in so far as it cut across tribal communities and led the government of India to establish forms of governance in these areas that differed from colonial governance in settled areas, notably the 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulations and its forerunner, the 1872 Punjab Frontier Regulations.[652] Michael Barthorp has emphatically pointed out that the purpose of the border was to 'define the responsibility for tribal disorders on either side of the line, across which neither the Amir nor the Indian Government was to interfere'.[653] However, this literature has sometimes analysed the frontier region in isolation from the rest of Afghanistan, treating British India's policies as bifurcated: frontier and Afghanistan polities have been seen as two separate domains and informed by different considerations.[654] As a consequence, to a certain degree the history of Afghanistan has been reduced to the history of the frontier. However, from British India's point of view, considerations around the frontier were embedded and overlapped with its wider Afghanistan policy: measures singled out as targeting the

[650] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 65; Hopkins, *Beyond Swat*; Martin J. Bayly, *Taming the Imperial Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[651] Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier, 1877-1947* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2011); Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*.
[652] Robert Nichols, ed., *The Frontier Crimes Regulation: A History in Documents* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2013), xi.
[653] Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, 100.
[654] See for example Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*; Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*; Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*.

pacification and policing of the frontier were in fact truly imperial policies aimed at extending British India's political and administrative control over Afghanistan. For example railway construction in Chaman or the Khyber were meant to restrain Afghanistan and exercise a firmer control over it, rather than merely facilitate frontier policing.[655]

This chapter also rethinks the geopolitical value of the border and its role in the Great Game. Historians have focused on the making of the border as falling within the broader dynamics of Anglo-Russian rivalry, according to which British India insisted on a boundary agreement in order to secure its frontier against possible Russian encroachments.[656] Accordingly, the literature has reduced the creation of a system of 'concentric borders' – British India's administrative border, the frontier areas and the Durand line – to a defensive measure. Historians have continued to see Afghanistan, lying beyond the tribal frontier, as 'a fully independent buffer state' well into the end of the nineteenth century.[657] Barthorp has notably argued that the north-west frontier of India was 'one of the most crucial outposts of the British Empire'.[658] In this light, the Durand line has been viewed as an imperial or international border, delimiting colonial dominions or at best separating respective 'spheres of influence'.[659] However, in the late nineteenth century the colonial state in India did not see this frontier in isolation from Afghanistan, but, as will be underlined below, considered both as integral part of the British empire.

This chapter seeks to nuance the current approach to colonial boundary making. It analyses the negotiations that led to the boundary agreement beyond the minutiae of frontier governance and provides insight into the broader theoretical and legal framework that made the different experiments with governing the tribes possible in the first place. The policies of indirect rule, the Sandeman system and other experiments in frontier governmentality were rendered possible by the colonial state's application of these contradictory ideas and approaches. The boundary debate

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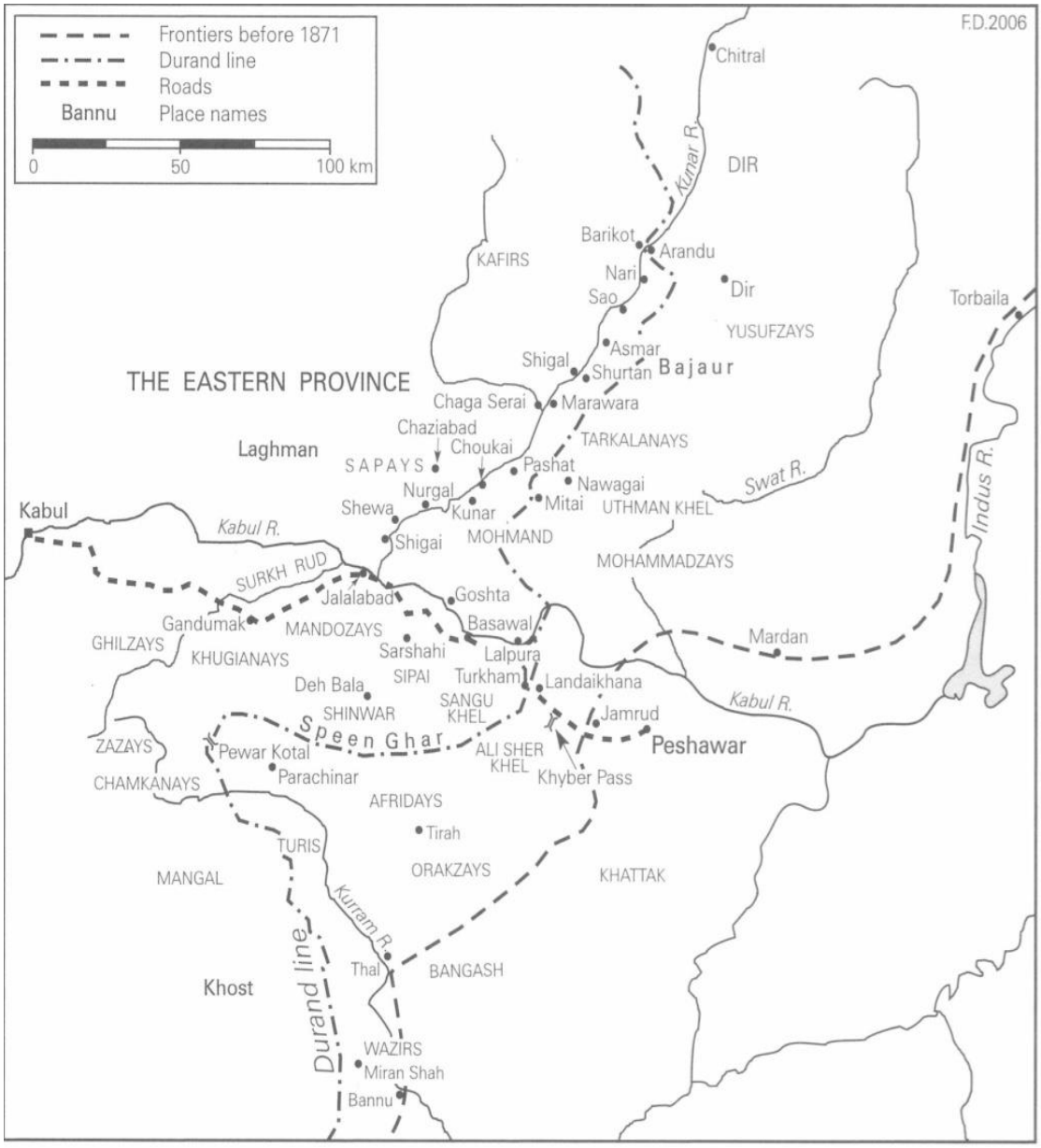
[655] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 67.
[656] Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', 49; Alastair Lamb, 'Studying the Frontiers of the British Indian Empire', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 53, no. 3 (1966): 247.
[657] Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', 51; Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*; Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908*; J.G. Elliott, *The Frontier 1839-1947. The Story of the North-West Frontier of India* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1968).
[658] Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, vii.
[659] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 178, 187; Lamb, 'Studying the Frontiers of the British Indian Empire', 251.

showed that the often confusing and contradictory policies the colonial state employed in this area were not exceptional but, drawing on Lauren Benton's work on quasi-sovereign enclaves around the empire, were by the 1890s an institutionalised way of arranging relations with non-directly administered territories. These ideas were also applied to the moving frontiers of the empire, in India's north-west and elsewhere. This chapter contributes to the more recent literature that has challenged colonial ideas of the frontier as a lawless, separate and exceptional space.[660] In contrast to older scholarship, I show that boundary making in this quarter of the empire was not only about protecting the settled districts of the Punjab from the raids and incursions of the tribes, but was motivated by a consistent policy of expansion that made use of the frontier space as a site of empire making.[661] This chapter starts by discussing the arguments raised within the government of India on the demarcation of British India's frontier to Afghanistan. Contrary to commonly held assumptions, it shows that pressure for a demarcation came from the amir and not from the government of India. The latter aimed to maintain an undefined border as long as possible. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Afghan polity and British India had been engaged in a silent scramble for land on the frontier. The government of India aimed at extending its influence into the Afghan territory in much the same way it had done in the border polities of Dir, Chitral, Khelat, Kashmir during the preceding decades. British India's attitudes towards frontier making also questioned the government of India's understanding of its imperial frontier, as the second section will show. The debate within the government showed that British officials and commentators considered Afghanistan's northern border towards Central Asia, demarcated by the Anglo-Russian boundary commission in 1884-7, the true imperial frontier of British India. The Durand line was thus understood as a regional or internal border, delimiting British India from the Afghan 'protectorate'. This term was used by Alfred Lyall to explicate Afghanistan's status *vis-à-vis* British India as that of a native

[660] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*; Hopkins, *Beyond Swat*; Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*.
[661] Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', 49; Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908*, 99–115; Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*.



The Indo-Afghan frontier[662]

polity that laid within the bounds of empire but that was not formally governed. The last section discusses the boundary agreement reached between the governments of India and Afghanistan in 1894. This section shows that the type of border British India envisioned was not an international frontier in the Westphalian sense of the term. Rather, the government of India established a three-tier frontier system that demarcated different layers of imperial sovereignty rather than two sovereign entities. With the Durand line agreement, the tribal lands of the Indo-Afghan frontier became a space in which its influence did not progressively diminish, as some historians have

[662] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 64.

argued. Rather, it became a space of potential expansion that allowed the government of India to continually press its presence further into the Afghan territory.

Resisting boundary demarcation in the north-west: Engineering legal categories of indeterminacy in the extension of imperial paramountcy

The years that led to the Durand agreement of 1894 saw continuous movements on both Afghan and British sides of what was to become the North-West Frontier. Both parties had been claiming territories and had tried to exercise increased degrees of influence over the tribes inhabiting them. From around 1888, the viceroy Lord Lansdowne adopted a new strategy of 'forward policy', which led to a 'concerted push into the tribal areas', notably in Waziristan, Khyber and Kurram, where the government of India tried to lay down definite forms of tribal administration during the 1890s.[663] In 1891, when negotiations for the border delimitation set off, Abdur Rahman was notably complaining about British encroachments on the frontier and of their 'gradually taking possession of Afghan soil by advancing from the direction of Kandahar, &c.'[664] In the preceding years the government of India had been asserting his presence in various ways. As the viceroy pointed out in June 1891:

> Our forward movement in the Zhob Valley, the opening of the Gomal Pass, our two recent frontier expeditions[665], our obvious anxiety to extend British influence among the frontier tribes, over some of which [the amir] conceives himself to have a kind of suzerainty, the completion of the Khojak Tunnel, the extension of our railway down the slope of the Khwaja Amran to New Chaman, and the transfer to the latter place of our reserve of railway material (which was, I believe, ostentatiously marked "Kandahar Reserve"), could not fail to attract his attention, and have, we know for a fact, attracted it, and provoked adverse comments on his part.[666]

The expansion of British influence into this frontier area was a silent annexation of lands. In 1895 Henry Bathurst Hanna, colonel of the Indian army who had taken part in the Afghan war, remarked that especially after 1885, when the Afghan Boundary Commission was starting its work in Maimena, British India had quietly advanced its frontier into Afghanistan and along the north-west:

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[663] Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 70, 74, 76.
[664] 'Nos. 201-209, Proposed British Mission to Kabul', July 1891, sec. 204, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[665] The viceroy probably referred to the 'Black Mountain Tribes' and the 'Miranzai' frontier expeditions. Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, 178.
[666] 'Nos. 201-209', K.W. No. 1 p. 9.

> Few people, either in England or in India, have, to this day, any conception of the fact that on this portion of the north-west frontier alone [along the line from Pishin to Kandahar], about 43,500 square miles have been added to the British Empire within the last fifteen years, by far the greater part of which since 1885.[667]

At the same time, the British garrison in Quetta, occupied in 1876 on occasion of the annexation of Khelat, had been significantly increased and inroads continued to be attempted in the direction of Kandahar.[668] Hanna argued that:

> Whilst on the south-west of our long borderline British troops were stealing towards Kandahar and *silently diffusing themselves* through the territories of the Duranis, Achikzais, Kakars, Musakhels, Luni Pathans, Khetrans, Bozdars, Zmaris, &c., at its north-eastern extremity the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops and the Escort of the British Resident at Gilgit had begun the same process of bringing hitherto independent tribes under the political authority of Great Britain.[669]

British India tried to gain further inroads into Afghan territory through a silent scramble for land, in which the extension of British influence, devised in different modes, clashed with the government of Kabul's suzerain relations over the frontier areas.

Anglo-Afghan encounters on the frontier in these years displayed another local dimension of the Great Game, which focused on British, rather than Russian expansionism. Looking at the making of the Durand line from the perspective of British India's expansionist tendencies shows how boundary-making impacted local political dimensions. Hanna in fact remarked that British actions amounted to occupation of 'fresh territory', achieved through a 'policy of insidious advance which had been previously so successful in saddling India with territory which she did not covet, and England with responsibilities of the nature and extent of which she was ignorant'.[670] In the 1870s, the expansionist attitude that had pushed the government of India to ask for greater access to the Afghan polity led to the annexation of the border districts assigned to the British by the 1879 Gandamak treaty. This attitude continued to inform British policies in the 1890s. British India continued to push its frontier into

[667] Henry Bathurst Hanna, *India's Scientific Frontier: Where Is It? What Is It?*, vol. 2, Indian Problems (London: Archibald Constable and company, 1895), 53–55.
[668] Swidler, *Remotely Colonial*, 71.
[669] Hanna, *India's Scientific Frontier: Where Is It? What Is It?*, 2:55 [emphasis added].
[670] Ibid., 2:53, 58.

Afghanistan, while camouflaging this advance under official proclamations of non-expansion and non-interference.[671]

Historians have acknowledged that this decade saw a renewed form of forward policy being applied to India's north-western frontier, but their analysis has largely been circumscribed to British India's military activities on the frontiers, notably the series of 'frontier expedition' aimed at punishing unruly tribal groups.[672] In the words of Christian Tripodi, after the end of the war, 'the forward policy had indeed been abandoned with respect to Afghanistan', while 'it remained (somewhat confusingly) in limited application to parts of Baluchistan and the tribal territories of the North-West Frontier'.[673] However, in the debate of the government of India, Afghanistan and the frontier areas were not presented as two separate domains. Its policy considered territorial expansion into the frontier as a first step towards gaining greater access into Afghanistan. As Hasan Kakar has convincingly argued, 'the new "Scientific Frontier" policy was, in fact, a modification of the one which had led to the war with Amir Sher Ali Khan': both were aimed at the ultimate occupation of Afghanistan.[674]

While some contemporaries, such as Hanna acknowledged the forward movement of British India, others denied that this attitude amounted to annexation. George Nathaniel Curzon, writing in 1907, argued that the policy of fortifying the 'advanced section of the frontier' in the district of Sibi – which had seen the fortification of Chaman and the construction of a railway through the Amran range – did not amount to 'annexation of territory'. For him, there was 'no note of aggression in the plans that have been either contemplated or carried out'.[675] Curzon's argument reflected similar contradiction and ambiguity to the ones that had characterised the government's debate about its attitude towards Afghanistan since the 1870s. He pointed out that the possibility of pushing the British Indian frontier to Kandahar 'would involve a total negation of our entire policy towards Afghanistan, which is one of non-interference except upon appeal, [and] may be dismissed as in the highest

[671] Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 2004.
[672] Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 70; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 174–75.
[673] Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 16–17.
[674] The 'scientific frontier' was placed by the government of India on the line uniting Kabul, Ghazni and Kandahar. Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 179.
[675] George Nathaniel Curzon, 'The "Scientific Frontier" an Accomplished Fact', *The Nineteenth Century*, 1888, 913.

degree improbable'. At the same time, for him the extension of the railway – which by the 1890s had extended to Chaman – to Kandahar was a certainty. He argued that this would however 'be as a measure of peace, undertaken at the request or with the concurrence of the Amir, not as a measure of war'.[676] British India conceptualised its relations with the Afghan borderlands and the other border polities as part of its frontier advance into the north-west. Its understanding of the frontier displays the colonial state's complex understanding of its relations with these polities. The inroads into Afghan territories displayed an ambiguous vision of the meaning of annexation and imperial sovereignty. Colonial officials did not always see the *de facto* addition of lands to British India as outright annexation because they saw the conquered polities as part of the British Indian empire, as will be seen below. Accordingly, the Durand line was conceptualised in a different way from the other Afghan borders the colonial state was demarcating.

British India claimed decisional power over Afghanistan's borders in different ways. On occasion of the delimitation of Afghanistan's northern frontiers to Central Asia, the rubric of 'foreign relations' was used to determine the amir's obligation to follow British 'advice' in the demarcation processes. The arguments raised in the delimitation of the Durand line were different. The government of India did not consider this demarcation as falling within its prerogatives over Afghanistan's 'foreign relations'. On the contrary, the upper Oxus's border, also part of the 1893 negotiations in Kabul, was considered within the sphere of Afghan foreign relations. On this border Durand claimed British India's power to decide. The envoy remarked to the amir that back in 1880:

> Sir Lepel Griffin was instructed to give you the assurance that, if any Foreign power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the dominions of Your Highness, in that event the British Government would be prepared to aid you to such extent and in such manner as might appear to the British Government necessary in repelling it, provided that Your Highness followed unreservedly the advice of the British Government in regard to your external relations.[677]

Durand pointed out that initially the amir had been against the Oxus border decided by British India. However, he stated that the amir 'eventually accepted it in

[676] Ibid., 910.
[677] 'Nos. 193-217, Report by Sir H.M. Durand on His Mission to Kabul. Agreements Concluded with His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan Regarding the Russo-Afghan and the Indo-Afghan Boundary', January 1894, sec. 197, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.

acknowledgement of his obligation to follow our advice in matters affecting his relations with Foreign powers'.[678] As has been seen in chapter three, the undefined nature of Anglo-Afghan relations, never formalised by any treaty agreement after the end of the war, left considerable space for different interpretations over time: the demarcation of the Maimena, Turkestan, Badakhshan and Wakhan borders showed that British control of Afghan foreign relations went hand in hand with continuous pushes for greater colonial interference on the ground.[679] However, during his mission to Kabul in 1893, Durand did not pressure the amir to comply with British 'advice' in the delimitation of the Indo-Afghan border. The government of India considered this frontier a key element in the extension of colonial authority over the Afghan polity and an instrument for further interference or possible annexation.

The arguments raised on occasion of the negotiation in 1893-4 displayed the colonial state's engagement with blurred forms of imperial sovereignty. Alfred Lyall, lieutenant-governor of the North-West Provinces and chief commissioner of Awadh, detailed the complexity of British understanding of the frontier towards Afghanistan. He argued that British India's frontier in the north-west was in fact a movable frontier and was the result of past British expansion in the Subcontinent. In the late nineteenth century the government of India continued the earlier practice of establishing around its territories a system of 'protectorates' which both secured the frontiers of the empire and acted as sites of further expansion. In this group of polities he included Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashmir and the 'petty States beyond Kashmir up to the skirts of the Hindu Kush'.[680] Benjamin Hopkins has argued that the Indo-Afghan frontier became a space of 'gradual recession', which marked the shift from the colonial state's 'assertion of sovereignty over the settled districts, to assertions of paramountcy in the tribal areas and agencies, to assertions of influence over Afghanistan'.[681] While this chapter broadly agrees with this argument, I argue that the different ways the colonial state devised for asserting itself in the north-west did not amount so much to an 'ebbing of imperial authority' the further one moved away from the settled districts, as Hopkins puts it. The Indo-Afghan frontier was indeed a space of layered sovereignty, but the colonial state continually attempted to expand it,

[678] Ibid., sec. 207.
[679] Ibid., sec. 197; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 168.
[680] Alfred Comyn Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', in *The Nineteenth Century. A Monthly Review*, vol. XXX (London: Sampspn Low; Marston & Company, 1891), 320.
[681] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 62.

rather than withdraw from it.[682] In fact, for Lyall, the colonial understanding of Afghanistan as a subordinated native polity, a 'protectorate' in his words, engineered the Durand line, and the tribal territories where it was nested, into a frontier of expansion possible in the first place. He maintained that the 'system of protectorates', which by the 1890s had interested considerable parts of the empire, continued to be responsible for the 'incessant expansion of our territorial responsibilities' and the extension of the empire's frontiers.[683] As will be seen below, the area where the Durand line was drawn in 1894 did not represent British India's outer or imperial frontier but was the site of an intermediate zone leading to the Afghan protectorate, which, Lyall argued, would likely be swallowed up by colonial expansion in the same way other frontier polities, such as Awadh and the Punjab, had been in the past.[684]

Along its north-western border, the government of India was reluctant to define the limits and the forms of imperial and Afghan sovereignty. Indeed, it strenuously resisted the application of stricter notions of sovereignty, pushed for by the amir. While in Maimena British India had aspired to a boundary along the model of Western territoriality, which marked Afghanistan's outer frontier. On the Durand line this did not happen and the government of India tried to maintain a rather blurred set-up. Here, it used paramountcy to conceptualise and extend its influence. However, paramountcy in the 1890s, as much as in the 1870s and before, continued to be a blurred concept in itself. The colonial state always refused to fully define it; indeed this blurredness of meaning became a key aspect of British India's policy towards its non-administered territories. Significantly, as late as 1928, the Butler Commission, investigating the 'relationship between the paramount power and the states' concluded that paramountcy had to remain undefined in order to be applied.[685] This 'vagueness concerning the limits of power', which, according to Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, was engrained for example into British relations with the native states of Rajputana, was embedded into the very rubric of paramountcy.[686] In 1893, the exact terms of British engagement in indirectly controlled areas continued to be left formally undefined and were left largely to be determined through practice and precedent on the ground.

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[682] Ibid.
[683] Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', 312.
[684] Ibid., 316.
[685] Rudolph and Rudolph, 'Rajputana under British Paramountcy', 139.
[686] Ibid.

In the application of paramountcy to the Indo-Afghan frontier, the colonial state clashed with the amir's desire for more territorial certainty. Especially after the 1891 political mission into Kafiristan, a largely independent region north-east of Kabul claimed by the government of Kabul, had become known, Abdur Rahman insisted with the British authorities in India to send a political mission to Kabul in order to negotiate the delimitation of his eastern border.[687] The government of India, and Edward Henry Clarke, assistant political secretary with the 1893 Kabul mission, admitted that all the amir wanted was 'to get his frontier demarcated, so that we cannot encroach upon him, nothing else'.[688] The literature on the north-west frontier of India has for the most part not acknowledged that insistence on the demarcation came from the amir. Historians have pointed to British India's eagerness to protect and secure its own territories through the creation of an international boundary towards Afghanistan. For them this border was specifically motivated by the recent Russian movements in the Wakhan region.[689] Russia had been active in the region since around 1891 and continued to attempt inroad until the final demarcation of this border in 1895.[690] However, this was not the first time the amir had advanced this request. In fact, Durand had admitted in 1885 that after his accession to power the amir had 'asked us more than once for a document defining his boundaries'.[691] Reports came from the British agent in Kabul that the amir was openly expressing his views in *darbar* that the border to British India should be demarcated as soon as possible. For him the demarcation of the limits between India and Afghanistan was 'a necessary and urgent matter requiring early attention'.[692] During a *darbar* held during Durand's political mission, the amir remarked that back in 1884 he had 'invited the

[687] 'Nos. 149-152, The Amir's Wish That a British Mission Should Be Sent to Kabul', March 1891, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[688] *The India List and India Office List. Compiled from Official Records by Direction of the Secretary of State for India in Council* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905), 461; 'Nos. 201-209', K.W. No. 1 p. 1-2.
[689] Omrani, 'The Durand Line'; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 177–78, 182; Omrani, 'The Durand Line', 183.
[690] Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*, 226–87.
[691] 'Nos. 760-787, Visit of the Amir of Afghanistan to India. His Highness's Conduct, Character, &c. Interviews of British Officers with His Highness. Grant of Money and Arms to His Highness', May 1885, sec. K.W. No. 1, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI p. 1.
[692] 'Nos. 329-334, Indo-Afghan Frontier. Discussion to Limits of Amir's Territory', May 1893, sec. K.W., Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI p. 9.

Government of India to send a commission to delimitate my northern frontier between the Oxus and the Persian border'.[693]

He had pointed out that at the time 'three sides of the Afghan frontier still remain[ed] undefined, namely, the frontier between Afghanistan and Russia, that between Afghanistan and China, and that between Afghanistan and British India'[694] He had written 'several times' to the British government:

> To send me a few authorised officers, who should be able and good statesmen by way of a mission, so that the Afghan frontiers should be demarcated, and that I might have no cause of anxiety, and the British government might also refrain from interfering with the frontiers. But I do not receive [the] answers which I wish. They reply to me deferring matters.[695]

The silent expansion of British influence into the area reached a breaking point when the government of India sent the mission into Kafiristan, a region where the amirs of Kabul had progressively gained ground. Abdur Rahman had been attempting to extend his authority over the area for the past years. However, it was only with the British mission and the subsequent demarcation of Kafiristan's border to British India that the amir invaded and annexed the area. The government of Kabul's approach towards Kafiristan was similar to the one employed since the Afghan Boundary Commission (A.B.C.) in Maimena, where demarcation went hand in hand with internal state-building. The amir was aware that British India's reluctance to define the Indo-Afghan border kept the door open for more interference on the frontier areas. At the same time, by the 1890s he made use of more defined notions of sovereignty to claim Afghanistan's right to demarcated borders.

While the amir insisted on a British-led mission to demarcate its borders, the debate within the government of India showed that British authorities were much less eager to have the boundary fixed. In April 1891, Durand, in a note to the viceroy, expressed his doubts about 'the advantage of any delimitation at all north of the Baluchistan Agency', in the territory north of Quetta and including Waziristan.[696] The foreign secretary argued that 'a Boundary Commission to examine and demarcate a frontier perhaps seven or eight hundred miles long would be a very big thing, even if

[693] 'Nos. 71-158, Kabul Mission. Return from Kabul. Telegraphic Reports and Diaries from the 3rd October to the 22nd November 1893', n.d., sec. 154, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[694] Ibid.
[695] 'Nos. 201-209', sec. 204.
[696] Ibid., sec. K.W. No. 1 p. 2.

there were no complications in the way of independent tribes and the like'.[697] In this instance, British India was applying an idea of undefined and shifting political relations to the frontier, which aimed at avoiding clear and definitive territorial claims. As the viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, pointed out in 1891: 'Any attempt to demarcate the frontier throughout its length is likely to give rise to many troublesome questions, and to compel us to assert definite claims which will be extremely distasteful to His Highness'.[698] The government considered the demarcation a very arduous undertaking because of the many disputes over territory it would unveil. It meant, in the words of Durand, 'to insist upon claims which will greatly displease the Amir – and the only points which you could humour him are comparatively of no importance'.[699] Afghan claims on Swat, Bajaur, on the Orakzais and Afridis, as well as the Waziris, over which 'the Amir is sure to claim suzerainty', could not be admitted by the British.[700] For the viceroy, the demarcation process in fact necessitated a clear decision over 'what territory does and what does not form part of the kingdom of Afghanistan'.[701] The debates around the demarcation of the frontier that led to the Durand mission in the fall of 1893 showed that far from pushing towards territorial certainty, British India attempted to protract the uncertainty of its position along its northwest frontier. This same attitude had been at the basis of a continuous process of territorial expansion. The government of India had all intentions of leaving this frontier un-demarcated, and it was only the insistence on the part of the Amir that made the Durand mission and the demarcation finally come into being.

The attitude the government of India displayed in this quarter of the Indian empire contradicts commonly-held assumptions about the colonial state's insistence on Western ideas of the state as the main rubric of definition. Historians have argued that by the late nineteenth century these ideas were well entrenched in the colonisers' actions in the Indian colony. Hopkins, drawing on the work of C.A. Bayly, has argued that, in the first half of the century, the East India Company, despite being a European institution, had been able to act as an 'uniquely Asian polity'.[702] In these early

[697] Ibid., K.W. No. 1 p. 2.
[698] Ibid. p. 9.
[699] Ibid. p. 6.
[700] Ibid. p. 2.
[701] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 8.
[702] Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity'; Bayly, *Empire and Information*.

decades the British in India had been able to maintain and understand 'indigenous concepts of suzerainty and tributary relations' and to insert themselves into the system of these native polities.[703] Hopkins has recognised the validity of this argument for the Afghan case and has argued that the 1871 Goldsmid boundary demarcation showed that Western 'ideas of statehood became the only acceptable language of politics' in a world dominated by European empires.[704] After 1857, Hopkins argues, 'the Government of India allowed such understandings to lapse, in favour of European norms of territoriality'.[705] However, the case of the Durand line disputes that in the late nineteenth century colonial understandings of sovereignty and of its relations with the Indian native polities were defined by the notions of Westphalian sovereignty.[706]

In the 1880-90s the enforcement of different forms of indirect rule across the British empire – in Africa, South Asia, South-East Asia – suggested a much more multifaceted understanding of these relations.[707] Since at least the 1870s, indirect rule had been at the basis of British India's attempts at governing Afghanistan. By the 1890s, it had assumed different shapes and in itself implied forms of governance that could not be reduced to undivided sovereignty. In the case of Afghanistan's north-western border, the employment of different forms of indirect rule had allowed the British to experiment with different strategies of influence-building that tapped into local political structures. Along British India's north-western frontier, the colonial state employed frames of understanding and action that blurred the boundary between Western sovereignty and Indian suzerainty. The arguments suggested by Bayly were more likely to surface in the debates in London. On the ground, colonial officials employed strategies of governance and influence-building that transcended ideal types of statehood. In fact, as Hopkins points out, the creation of a multi-layered or concentric frontier, as mentioned above, displayed a colonial state that was straddling between 'the norms and forms of modern Westphalian statehood, with clearly delineated borders, and its own understanding of previous forms of political authority on the South Asian Subcontinent'.[708] In 1892-3 British India did not push, and rather

[703] Hopkins, 'The Bounds of Identity', 238.
[704] Ibid.
[705] Ibid.
[706] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 62.
[707] Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 214–22; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*, The California World History Library 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
[708] Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 62.

resisted, the establishment of a defined frontier in this area because it still found it rational and useful to navigate the different ideas of indigenous and European statehood. The colonial state continued to be comfortable with the ambiguity between direct and indirect rule, and different forms of influence. As had been the case in the early days of Company expansion, it continued to use both annexation and native mediation as ways to secure and expand British India's frontiers.

The ambiguity with which the government of India approached the boundary negotiations subsumed its engagement with the legal categories that had emerged around Britain's relation with the native states. The Afghan case was part of a bigger debate around certain legal cases that questioned the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the Indian native polities. Lauren Benton has pointed to an 1871 extradition case in which a British subject was tried for misappropriating local government funds in the princely state of Travancore. The case centred on the extension of the native states' jurisdiction over British subjects. The government of India argued that the matter could not be regulated by 'treaties or other agreements' because this would attribute certain prerogatives to the native states that had to remain under the paramount power, i.e. Britain. Matters such as extraterritoriality, the argument ran, could not be 'negotiated' as among sovereign states but had to be left uncertain in order to allow the paramount power the possibility of regulating the matter on an *ad hoc* basis in many cases.[709] Maintaining the relation between the government of India and the states indeterminate was what paramountcy was all about: the colonial state could arrogate, in Benton's words, 'the power not to decide'.[710] At the same time, in the Travancore case, paramountcy was the framework for understanding the unequal relation between the colonial state and the native polities.[711] Officials at the time remarked that 'there is a paramount power in the British Crown, of which the extent is wisely left undefined. There is a subordination in the Native States which is understood, but not explained'. They argued that the native states had partly ceded by treaty and were partly deprived of certain 'features of sovereign right'.[712]

British India, since the subsidiary treaties it had signed with the Indian states at the start of the eighteenth century, had always claimed jurisdiction over different

[709] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 258.
[710] Ibid., 260.
[711] Ibid., 265.
[712] Ibid. Benton cites IOR P/752, Government of India, Foreign Department Proceedings, September 1873, Judicial, No. 9, pp. 12-13.

aspects of the native polities' functions, including foreign relations, without defining the limits of its jurisdiction. Following the 1857 mutiny, the government had outwardly reverted to a less interventionist approach towards the states, as questioned in chapter one. It 'tried to avoid the extremes of both annexation and complete non-interference', thus creating an uneasy equilibrium between the two.[713] As the example of Mysore shows, which was restored to princely rule in 1881 after decades of semi-direct British government and endless debate about the degree of interference to be exerted on the Maharaja, the policy proclaimed on the verge of the mutiny towards the Indian states did never completely wipe out British India's interventionist tendencies but rather gave them a different form.[714] In the case of Afghanistan, the government of India applied a similar understanding. It drew consistently on the model of the Indian native state and other examples of indirect rule around the empire to determine the nature of Anglo-Afghan relations. As in the case of the native states, the colonial state claimed the right not to define Anglo-Afghan relations relations. By the later nineteenth century, the framework through which these relations were conceptualised had been forged into a set of recognisable legal categories, in which 'paramountcy' held centre-stage. During the 1884 boundary demarcation in Maimena and now during the Durand line negotiations the colonial state used indeterminacy as an institutionalised category. As such it expressed the status of relations while deliberately leaving them vague.

The question of the limits of the empire: Reinforcing Afghanistan's subordination through the making of an internal border

The Durand line crucially questioned both the geographical limits of the empire and the form of Anglo-Afghan relations. The demarcation displayed a British Indian empire constituted of different degrees of influence and sovereignty and interrogated the 'colonial' nature of the Anglo-Afghan encounter. As mentioned above, the conceptualisation of Afghanistan as one of Britain's 'intermediate protectorates' – a term that subsumed a variety of different settings and degrees of imperial involvement – allowed for different understandings of the Durand and Maimena boundaries.[715] In the words of Lyall:

[713] Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt*, 235.
[714] Ibid., 227–37; Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 404–14.
[715] Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', 315, 322.

> The true frontier of the British dominion is Asia, the line which we are more or less pledged to guard, from which we have warned off trespassers, does not by any means tally with the outer edge of the immense territory over which we exercise administrative jurisdiction, in which all the people are British subjects for whom our governments make laws. The true frontier, according to my view, included not only this territory, but also large regions over which the English Crown has established protectorate of different kinds and grades, varying according to circumstance and specific conditions. This protectorate may involve the maintenance of internal order, or it may amount only to a vague sovereignty, or it may rest on a bare promise to ward off unprovoked foreign aggression.[716]

Lyall argued that in the north-west of India the British were not content with 'fencing ourselves round by a belt of free tribal lands or a row of petty chiefships' but they 'looked over and beyond' the 'slopes of the hills that fringe the great Indian plains' to mainland Afghanistan, where the British empire placed its outer border on the Oxus, the river that 'divides Bokhara from Afghanistan, the Russian from the English protectorate'.[717] Lyall called the extension of this outer frontier a 'sphere of influence', used interchangeably 'protectorate', by which he meant a vanguard zone of the empire aimed to ward off external intrusion and protect the administrative areas.[718]

Afghanistan was conceptualised as within the limits of the empire by other high-profile British administrators as well. In 1893, Durand argued to the amir that the government of India regarded Afghanistan as 'an outwork of the Indian Empire', whose interests were identical with British interests.[719] For these figures, the lands beyond the Durand frontier were both beyond the official bounds of the empire – in fact Lyall remarked that British India did not have with 'the States inside the line' of its outer frontier, Afghanistan and Baluchistan, any 'formal compact' – but still within the reach of its interests and indirect influence.[720] The inclusion of Afghanistan as part of the empire had pushed the imperial frontier to the Oxus, demarcated in 1884-7, thus leaving the Durand line to occupy a different status. Lyall remarked that in the course of Britain's territorial expansion in India, the zones that delimited the Company's earlier possessions could 'often be traced by the survival of some petty principalities, that escaped being swallowed up by a powerful neighbour because it

[716] Ibid., 314.
[717] Ibid., 317.
[718] Ibid., 318.
[719] 'Nos. 193-217', sec. 194 p. 2.
[720] Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', 317.

was originally our policy to protect them' as part of a century-long frontier policy.[721] The tribal areas of the north-west, integral to the territorial expansion of British India, as seen above, remained as a zone that was no longer the official frontier of its dominions but still retained a status of semi-independent political formation by virtue of its previous role as outer border, in a way tantamount to the status of the Burmese borderlands following the 1885 annexation of Burma. Lyall argued that the 'tribal country' which surrounded the whole perimeter of northern India was 'in former times the tribal belt that actually formed our outer barrier', which had been brought 'within our extreme frontier' by the advance of the frontier to the Oxus.[722] The territories interested by the delimitation of the Durand line were no longer 'the external limit of our dominions'; they had become British India's 'inner line of defence' upon which the amir was not allowed to encroach.[723] Thus, the Durand line was in fact an internal or regional border, delimiting different layers of imperial sovereignty and engagement. The tribal territories that were carved out of imperial expansion in the north-west became a liminal zone between different layers of the empire.

The debate on Afghanistan's place in the empire that surrounded the demarcation of its borders between the 1880s and 1890s reflected the wider question of how to insert the 'quasi-sovereignty' of certain parts of the empire into a coherent system. Historians have concentrated on questioning the legal status of the Durand line and have interrogated whether it should be considered an international border or something else.[724] While this body of literature is significant to understand contemporary territorial disputes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is largely limited by strictly evaluating the border on the basis of international law rather imperial considerations.[725] The issues raised with regard to Afghanistan were not isolated and surfaced in similar ways in cases involving the native states of India. Benton has argued that tensions between the native princes' internal and external sovereignty became most visible on occasion of 'border disputes, jurisdictional

[721] Ibid., 316; Benjamin D. Hopkins, 'The Frontier Crimes Regulation and Frontier Governmentality', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 2 (May 2015): 369–389.
[722] Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', 321.
[723] Ibid.
[724] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 158; Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line'.
[725] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 181–82.

tangles, and controversies about the application of imperial legislation'.[726] In these occasions, the colonial state was forced to define its relations with the native polity and determine the reaches of imperial and native sovereignty, which were blurred and overlapping for most of the time. However, as in the case of the number of controversies that arose between the native states and the government of India mentioned before – Mysore, Travancore and Baroda – the 'tensions surrounding the legal and political status of the princely states were never in fact resolved'.[727] In these decades, British India continually questioned the position of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* the empire. British officials and commentators interrogated the degree to which the imperial power was allowed and willing to intervene in this polity. Boundary demarcation constantly demanded the creation of more clearly defined spheres and prerogatives. However, the nature of Afghanistan as a native polity subsumed within the reach of imperial paramountcy fundamentally hindered this definition and allowed for the government of India to think about Afghanistan's internal affairs, officially outside its prerogatives, as within the regulatory gaze of the colonial state.

The inclusion of Afghanistan as an integral part of the empire reserved the government of India the right to intervene in its internal affairs in moment of crisis. In fact, as Lyall theorised, the colonial state could exercise actual 'protective influence' over 'natives States, or chiefships, or tribes, whose territory has marched with our own boundary' and extend 'political influence' beyond, as he put it, 'the line of our actual possession'.[728] The status of Afghanistan as a native polity on British India's moving frontier compelled the government of India to extend its influence. As seen in chapter three, this logic, interpreted in terms of British authority over Afghan foreign relations, had informed the 1884-7 boundary making. Now, this same rationale was used by the government of India to theorise for the rectification of imperial frontiers, plan future annexations and discipline royal succession. In an 1887 memorandum on the Maimena boundary, Ridgeway, the British commissioner, had pointed out that the frontier settled with Russia did not necessarily have to be permanent, in case Russia raised objections to it. He argued for the possibility of revising the frontier upon the amir's death. This would in fact be of advantage to British India:

[726] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 241.
[727] Ibid., 243.
[728] Lyall, 'Frontiers and Protectorates', 313.

> At present we stand pledged to protect a frontier far in advance of our strategic frontier, which I believe to be the Hindu Kush, and when, on the Amir's death, Afghanistan breaks up into fragments, we shall be glad to make our political and strategic frontier identical, and to bring the districts within that frontier well within our control, ceasing to be responsible for anything beyond.[729]

The government of India identified its 'strategic frontier' with the Hindu Kush mountains and Ridgeway hypothesised that in case of unrest developing inside the country the government should be allowed to re-draw its 'political frontier', now on the Oxus, on the Hindu Kush. British India felt the right to impinge on the geographical form Afghanistan was assuming. This displayed its understanding of Afghanistan as a subordinate polity.

The colonial state had never officially acknowledged Abdur Rahman as the successor of amir Dost Muhammad Khan. Since his appointment in 1880, the government of India had questioned his status as ruler of the country and refused to lay out formally British relations with Afghanistan. The government of India questioned Abdur Rahman's right to occupy the territory the former amir had managed to include under his authority. In fact, in 1881 Kandahar had been 'transferred' as a concession of territory to the amir from the possession of the government of India and was not seen as an organic part of Afghanistan. In 1892 Durand, with regard to the amir's territorial claims on the north-west frontier, pointed out that:

> As to Daur I think we have a case. It is true that many years ago we told Dost Muhammad we did not want it – but he never occupied it – and putting this fact aside we have never, so far as I know, admitted that Abdur Rahman was heir to Dost Muhammad's kingdom. He was appointed by us Amir of the Kabul province, with leave to take Herat if he could. Then he asked us to be allowed to take Khost, and we agreed. After that we gave him Kandahar. He did not derive his rights from Dost Muhammad.[730]

In the 1890s colonial officials viewed the amir as a native ruler whose right to the amirship did not accrue to him from his ancestry but from his appointment by the British government, the paramount power. Therefore, the colonial state also retained the right to decide the amir's political destiny. During the debates leading to the demarcation of the Maimena border, a member of the viceroy's council had played

[729] George Nathaniel Curzon Curzon, 'Nos. 392-398, The Amir's Memorandum about the Settlement of His Frontier to Lord Salisbury and the Viceroy of India', April 1887, sec. 394, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[730] 'Nos. 329-334', sec. K.W. p. 2.

with the idea of deposing the amir in case he disagreed with the settlement. However, he admitted that 'his deposition would throw Afghanistan into anarchy, and might afford Russia a pretext for interference, direct or indirect'.[731] At the same time, annexation of Afghanistan continued to be one of the possibilities discussed in council.

While in 1893 the government agreed that 'the mere cost of military operations on an extended scale would be a most serious evil in the present state of our finances', annexation was *de facto* never ruled out informally.[732] In fact, when reports about the deteriorating health of the amir began to arrive from Kabul between the late 1880s and early 1890s, opinions started to circulate about the possibility of staging military demonstrations on the Afghan frontier as a way to direct a peaceful succession and, in case of serious unrest, prepare for a new military invasion. The perspective of the amir's death also opened up the possibility of implementing a more tangible presence in his territories. In January 1885 Ridgeway wrote to Lyall to insist on the presence of British officers along the frontier after the demarcation.[733] He notably pointed out that 'if we kept British officers here, they would on the amir's death and the consequent break up, administer the country'. He stated that it was the relations the British entertained with the Char Aimaks, analysed in chapter three, that would allow them to do so and without the need for British troops to secure the position, because 'officials would be as safe here as in India'.[734] For him the relations forged with the Turkomans and the Char Aimaks would work at their best with the presence of a British officer. Until the death of Abdur Rahman Khan the status of Afghanistan continued to be questioned by the government of India. While the official discourse continued to uphold it as an independent native polity, in practice the engineering of 'imperial formations' was constantly attempted and sometimes achieved, along Afghanistan's frontiers.[735] In the case of the Durand line, the ambiguous nature of Anglo-Afghan relations the government of India attempted to maintain as long as possible established the tribal zones as a space of transition, in

[731] Ibid. p. 2.
[732] Ibid., K.W. p. 11.
[733] *The India List and India Office List. Compiled from Official Records by Direction of the Secretary of State for India in Council*, 551.
[734] 'Mss Eur F132/45, Maine, Sir H.S. Correspondence West Ridgeway. Letters on and about the Boundary Commission'', March 1884, 34–35, India Office Records and Private Papers, BL.
[735] Stoler and McGranahan, 'Introduction', 8.

which British India could continue to experiment with different forms of governance and pushed its influence into the territories held by the government of Kabul.

The demarcation of the Durand line: restraining Afghanistan through hybrid frontier zones of imperial expansion

The boundary line negotiated in 1894 between the governments of India and Afghanistan *de facto* delimited only the amir's territory, while creating the conditions for further British expansion into the tribal areas.[736] It resulted in a multi-layered frontier system. British India maintained the old administrative boundary it had inherited from the Sikh government, up to which 'the Punjab Government ruled, policed, taxed and dispensed justice'.[737] The boundary agreement established a 'second frontier' in the tribal areas that delimitated the border of eastern Afghanistan and the amir's reach up to the borders of Chitral, Bajaur, Swat, Buner, Dir, the Khyber, Kurram and Waziristan, which were all included into British India's 'sphere of influence'.[738] Here, British India maintained major military and political outposts in Chaman and the Khyber area. The agreement thus created, in the words of Lord Roberts, then the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, an 'intermediate country' between the 'frontier which […] India should hold' and 'the boundary of Afghanistan on the north and east', which was then 'occupied by independent tribes'.[739] As Curzon put it in 1888, 'along this entire border there is a fringe of neutral territory often over a hundred miles in breadth, between our dominions and those of the Amir, occupied and garrisoned by wild native tribes, immemorially turbulent and free, owing no absolute allegiance to either power, and alternatively a thorn in the side of each'.[740] Over these, Roberts pointed out, it was essential that British India's 'influence should be extended'.[741] The demarcation of the frontier had the scope of giving 'the Amir a clear warning that we regard a certain line as the limit beyond which his supremacy does not and must not extend':[742]

> It must not be supposed that it is intended that the British Government should annex all the country up to the frontier. What is proposed is that this boundary should be the limit up to which we will allow the Amir to exercise

[736] Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 767.
[737] Barthorp, *The North-West Frontier*, 100.
[738] Ibid., 99; 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 2.
[739] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 1.
[740] Curzon, 'The "Scientific Frontier" an Accomplished Fact', 904.
[741] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 1.
[742] Ibid. p. 8.

> his authority, all the country on this side of it falling within the sphere of British influence and not to be interfered with in any way by the Amir or his officials.[743]

The frontier that was settled amounted to British India's 'frontier of influence' or, in fact, a 'region of influence', which disguised strict definition of territoriality.[744] On this point, the assistant quartermaster general, Alexander Herbert Mason, added that the frontier on which the government was debating before 1893 was 'the Amir's frontier, not the British'.[745] In fact, once the frontier had been negotiated, Durand wrote back to India that 'in the end [the amir] agreed to an arrangement by which our respective spheres of influence were defined, and by which he practically gave up his claim to suzerainty over the independent frontier tribes'.[746] The tribal areas were made into a region or zone of influence in which British authority could potentially expand, while definitely settling Afghanistan's frontier towards India.

The literature has stressed the role of the Durand line in creating two separate spheres of influence on the two sides of the new border.[747] However, the definition of 'spheres of influence' pointed to more complex understanding of this frontier.[748] In fact, after the demarcation the possibilities for the two governments to extend their influence became very different. The form this frontier assumed does not clearly emerge from the official documents compiled by the government of India and the Durand mission. At first glance, British accounts centred around the creation of an 'Indo-Afghan frontier', and upheld the idea that an international boundary was created.[749] However, if analysed more closely, British administrators had a more nuanced idea of what this frontier line meant in practice. The legal status of the new set-up could not be defined, even by the government of India. In practice, however, the agreement curtailed the possibility of the government of Kabul to establish suzerain relations with the tribes and the small kingdoms of Chitral and Dir, with which Kabul had had a long history of political relations. On the other hand, it created the possibility for British India to move freely within the intermediate space occupied by the tribes. There, rather than fixing both polities' borders, the Durand line created a

[743] Ibid., 329A.
[744] Ibid., K.W. p. 2.
[745] Ibid., 329A p. 4.
[746] 'Nos. 193-217', 194 p. 7.
[747] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 179.
[748] Ibid.
[749] 'Nos. 329-334'.

zone of advance for British India, which allowed its north-western boundary to shift further, albeit not officially, by the turn of the century.

On British India's side of the border, the boundary agreement created a zone of legal and administrative ambiguity. In the debate within the government of India there was a tension between 'annexation' and the extension of British 'sphere of influence'. Charles Lewis Tupper, chief secretary of the government of Punjab between 1890 and 1895 and according to Barbara Ramusack 'one of the most cited British officers writing on the evolution of British indirect rule in India', expressed the full ambiguity of the boundary arrangement:[750]

> I think it will at present be best to use a rather vague phrase which has not yet, so far as I am aware, acquired a fixed significance in jurisprudence and international law, and may therefore the more readily be applied to the peculiar conditions of the problem before us. All will agree that the time has come when it is necessary to demarcate the respective *spheres of influence* of the Amir and ourselves. What the Amir's *influence* in his sphere is to amount to we certainly need not at present consider with any exactness. As to the character of our own *influence*, that is a matter on which opinion will differ very widely. All will agree that it is not to amount to annexation; but the distance by which it is to be removed from annexation is the thing upon which authorities will disagree.[751]

While the creation of spheres of influence left the government of India with the potential to extend certain sovereign rights over the tribal territories, the definition of the degree of sovereignty to be exercised could hardly be determined. A member of the viceroy's council, commenting on Tupper's opinion, further explicated the complexity of British India's intervention:

> This is worth nothing. To say that we do not mean to "annex" settles nothing of much practical importance from the political point of view. You may have territory which is not annexed, *i.e.* made part of "British India", and which from the political point of view and from the point of view of the Amir and the tribes is just the same as if it was "annexed".[752]

The settlement of the Durand line thus questioned the meaning of the legal categories used to define the relations between Britain and its colonial territories. It showed that often there was a disjuncture between definition and content of an area's legal status

[750] Katherine Prior, *Tupper, Sir (Charles) Lewis (1848–1910)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36577; Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 59.
[751] 'Nos. 329-334', 331 p. 1.
[752] Ibid., sec. 331 p. 1.

vis-à-vis British India. Tupper argued that relations could be established 'without attempting to define their judicial significance'.[753]

From a legal point of view, Tupper did not see a contradiction between delimiting spheres of influence and leaving the forms of British presence undefined. In a similar vein, he also argued for a porous type of border, which potentially did not exclude the exertion of some form of influence by the amir into British territory and on the tribes residing there. For him, it seemed unwise to 'press the exclusion of the Amir's interference in our sphere of influence to such a point that we should be pledged to resent his receiving deputations of tribesmen, giving them presents in cash and lungis, and writing them friendly letters'.[754] He stated that excluding all forms of interference by the amir in these areas would mean to 'cut clean against the grain of the traditions of centuries' and that only the amir's 'troops, forts, cantonments, civil governors, revenue collectors, *Khassadars*, and generally all establishment and actual exercise of rule' should be excluded from the British sphere.[755] Tupper, along with some members of the viceroy's council and Sir Denis Fitzpatrick, the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, argued that outright 'partition' of territory should not be employed as a guiding principle for the frontier settlement. Thus, the idea of 'spheres of influence' did imply a division of territory, it did not exclude some interference on the part of the amir.[756]

The legal debate originating from the demarcation process shows that for British administrators the Durand line was far from being a border in the Westphalian sense of the term, in that it was not based on notions of strict territorial exclusion. The boundary agreement created a hybrid frontier zone, in which British forms of sovereignty, suzerainty or other forms of influence were never fixed nor permanently defined. The colonial state was unable, or unwilling, to define what form of boundary the demarcation had established exactly, but colonial administrators did not see this as a problem. In fact, the debate on the Durand line showed that a variety of different and often opposed opinions existed within the government of India. For many of them, it was best to leave the practical arrangements on the ground 'to be dealt with

[753] Ibid., 331 p. 1.
[754] Ibid., sec. 331 p. 1.
[755] Ibid., 331 p. 1.
[756] Ibid., 333; IOR/PS/5265, 'Note by Sir Denis Fitzpatrick' quoted in Omrani and Ledwidge, 'Rethinking the Durand Line', 52.

pro rata nata'.[757] Again, practice on the ground filled in where legal theory could not elaborate clear categories.

British India's aims in the making of this frontier were not directed exclusively at securing its influence over the 'independent tribes', but attempted to devise territorial inroads beyond the tribal areas. A case in point is the region of Kafiristan, where British India had attempted to gain access since the 1880s. Between 1885 and 1892, a number of missions led by British officials had been sent into the region, as well as into Badakhshan, which had made use of British-controlled Chitral, Dir, Kashmir and Hunza as entry points into the Hindu Kush. These missions, in particular the 1890 mission into Kafiristan, mentioned before, led by Robertson, the agency surgeon in Gilgit, were more than exploratory endeavours but had precise political goals. In 1889 Durand argued that the 'opening up of friendly relations with Kafiristan [had been] one of the main objects of Colonel Lockart's expedition [into Kafiristan] in 1885, and is one of the objects of our present Gilgit Mission'.[758] Lockart's had been the first mission into the region south of the Hindu Kush in twelve years and was part of broader effort at exploring the region of the upper Oxus river. It had visited Kashmir, Gilgit, Chitral, Hunza and arrived in eastern Kafiristan.[759] Similarly, in 1890 the foreign secretary prompted the resident in Kashmir to 'keep Robertson's expedition quiet' because 'there are persistent rumours that [the] Amir is mediating action against Kafiristan and it might stir him up'.[760]

Kafiristan became the main setting for the silent scramble for land between the two polities. For the government of India, it remained a main point of contention throughout the negotiation in Kabul and the subsequent demarcation. The viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, remarked that in the delineation of the border 'military and political considerations could not be separated': for him, there was not much difference 'between the obvious military and the obvious political frontier' apart from the case of Kafiristan.[761] The military department, and Roberts in particular, argued in favour of excluding this region from the amir's territory and including it into the British

[757] 'Nos. 329-334', sec. 331 p. 1.
[758] 'Nos. 118-152, Deputation to Kafiristan of Surgeon G.S. Robertson of the Gilgit Agency', May 1890, K.W. No. 1, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[759] Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95*, 155.
[760] 'Nos. 118-152', sec. 119.
[761] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 3.

sphere of influence.[762] Mason, the quartermaster general, argued that Kafiristan 'has always been independent of Kabul' and the amir was thus not legitimised to lay claims on it. In addition, 'by including it within our limits, our frontier would be carried up to the Hindu Kush, and we should have the control of the passes west of the Dorah leading south from Badakshan'[763] The government of India attempted to gain access to Kafiristan and Badakhshan, which were areas claimed by the amir of Kabul. These missions should be read in light of British India's expansionist policy, which was a clear continuation of the earlier wave of territorial extension in the 1870s, as outlined in chapter one. British India had a long pre-history of attempts to establish closer links with the little kingdoms of Chitral, Dir, Hunza but also Badakhshan and Kafiristan.

The political mission into Kafiristan did not only aim at territorial expansion, but also at establishing political relations with its inhabitants. According to Durand, the scope of Robertson mission into Kafiristan, was to 'tighten' British India's 'relations' with the Kafirs. He argued that it was a:

> matter of much importance to get to know the country and the people. They are thoroughly anti-Afghan, and they have maintained their independence very resolutely. They might in certain contingencies be of much use to us.[764]

As has been pointed out in chapters two and three, during its encounter with Afghanistan the government of India had tried to build relations with communities residing within the political orbit of the government of Kabul. They were often distinct from the ruling Pashtun group by way of religion and ethnicity. Similar to how they had tried to win the collaboration of the the Karabagh Hazaras in 1879 and the Char Aimaks in 1884-7, in this case British officials attempted to establish local allegiances with the Kafiri tribes. In this way, they aimed at excluding the amir's stake on the area. They wanted to detach them from the orbit of the amir and include them into British India's sphere of influence. As as been seen in chapter three, British strategies of influence-building in Kafiristan interfaced with the progressive consolidation of the government of Kabul's rule. As mentioned elsewhere, the government of Kabul annexed and settled those areas assigned to it by colonial boundary-making.

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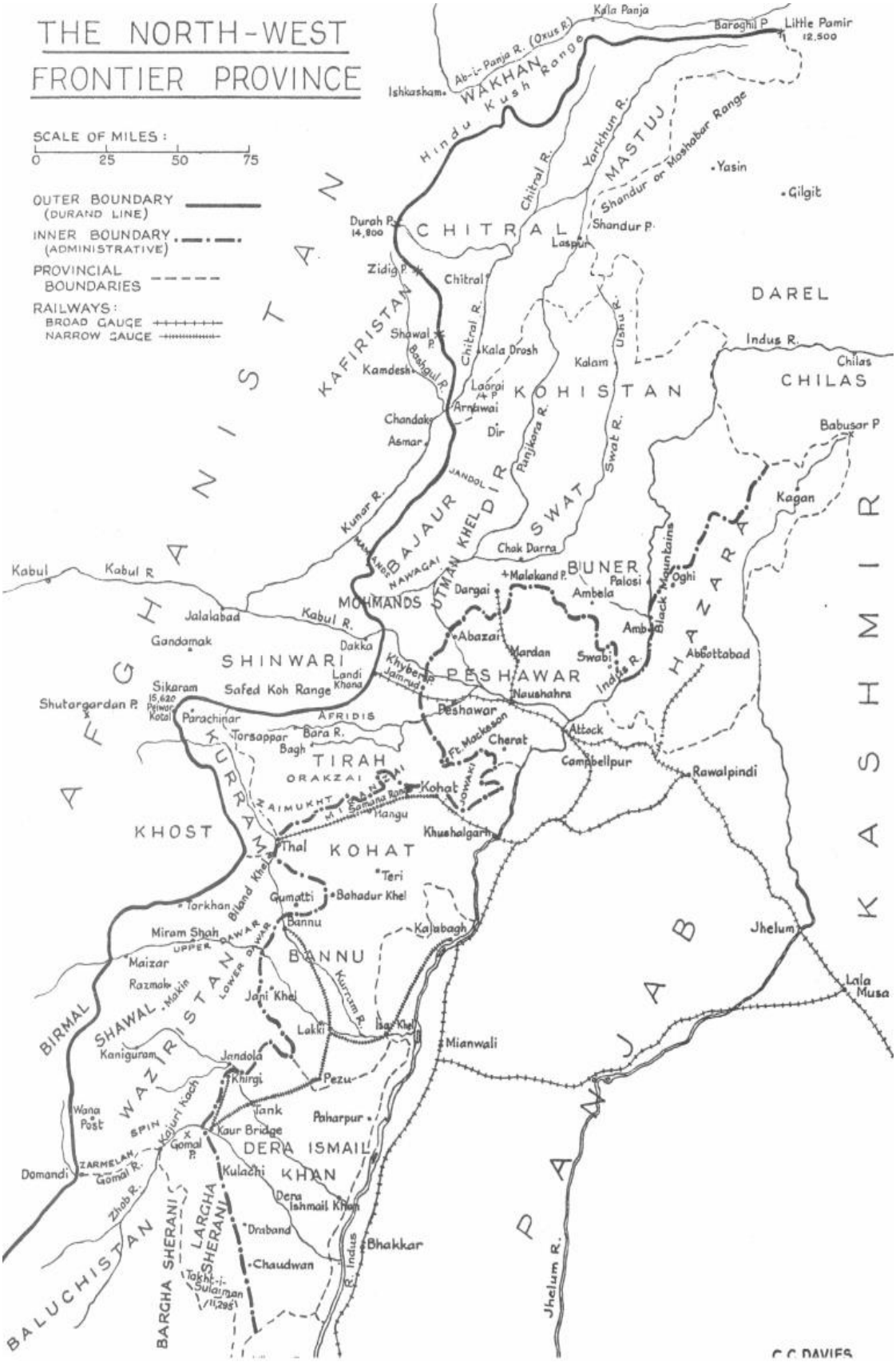
[762] Ibid. p. 4.
[763] Ibid., 329A.
[764] 'Nos. 118-152', K.W. No. 1.

The government of India again expanded its influence inside Afghanistan through exclusive alliances with local communities. Far from supporting a strong and independent Afghan polity, it tried to weaken the government of Kabul in this quarter in order to create an inroad for future access. Creating political contacts alternative to the official relations with the court of Kabul was instrumental to keeping Afghanistan's door open, as much as engineering a blurred border towards this polity. The policy pursued towards Kafiristan drew on previous strategies towards the people of Chitral, the Hazaras and Char Aimaks. It had had the goal of creating the conditions for a potential annexation and the extension of British India's border. As will be seen below, in those years British authorities discussed the possibility of expansion in concrete terms.

In the tribal areas of the frontier, the extension of British India's influence moved hand in hand with claims of exclusive sovereignty over the tribes. In 1891, a member of the viceroy council pointed out that 'what [the amir] probably desires is that a line should be drawn as favourably to him as possible. What we desire is that we shall be allowed to make railways and telegraph lines and to extend our influence indefinitely over the tribes'.[765] During the negotiations in Kabul in 1893-4 the government of India tried to secure rights of exclusive political relations over as much tribal territory as it could. The arguments put forward by Roberts, Lansdowne, Durand and the members of the India council were centred on the idea of a military frontier but also a tribal one. The debate very much revolved around determining which tribes should be included under the control of the government of India and on 'which we cannot allow [the amir] to exercise any influence'.[766] In the case of Waziristan for example, eventually assigned to British India, Durand pointed out that despite the concession to the amir of the Birmal valley, located 'on the north-western

[765] 'Nos. 201-209', K.W. No. 1 p. 13.
[766] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 1, 11.



The North-West Frontier Province[767]

[767] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908*, fig. Map 2.

corner of the Waziri country', British India still retained 'a good line of communication round the rear of the Waziris, and thus give us complete command of the tribe as a whole'. Through the inclusion of certain tribes into their sphere of influence, the British aimed at retaining 'exclusive right of direct relations with the Waziri tribe' and curtail their relations with Kabul. As one council member remarked:

> It is on military grounds of the first importance that the tribes should be under our influence, for there is every reason to suppose that within measurable time the Tochi route will be the main strategic route into Afghanistan. Its advantages are very great, for with a railway to Bannu it gives us the shortest line into the heart of Afghanistan; it further leads direct on Ghazni, from which the Hazaras, always friendly to us and hostile to the Afghans, could be brought fully under our influence.[768]

Similar to what happened in 1884, boundary making was considered a stepping-stone for increased British influence over local communities within a territory that had *de facto* been linked to the amir of Kabul for a very long time. Thus, securing the stability of the frontier and fencing off possible threats to British India's security were far from central to the debate. As had been the case during the A.B.C., tribal, ethnic and sectarian categories were again employed in the making of empire beyond the reach of the colonial administration.

In the boundary negotiations the government of India drew on a conceptualisation of the tribal area as divided into distinct ethological-geographical units.[769] Claims to land were made on the basis of the principle of ethnological continuity, already adopted in Maimena, by which sovereign claims on a tribe presupposed control of all the land inhabited by this group. As had been the case in Maimena, here the claimants' history of interactions with a certain tribal group was used as a complementary criterion. Lansdowne argued that, despite the danger of laying territorial claims without precise cartographic knowledge, 'as a general rule to the limits to be laid down must be *tribal limits*' [emphasis added]. He provided a list of tribes, which had to be excluded from the amir's frontier: Kakars, Wazirs, Turis, Bajauris, Zaimushts, Afridis, Orakzaies.[770] However, the negotiations were conducted on the basis of gross geographical approximation. Clarke, member of the viceroy's council, stressed 'the obstacles to any precise delineation of what we may call our *second frontier*, i.e., the frontier of British as opposed to Afghan influence [emphasis

[768] 'Nos. 329-334', 329A.
[769] Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*.
[770] 'Nos. 329-334', K.W. p. 3, 10.

added]'. He argued that the delineation would represent a 'great undertaking' and might involve British India with 'the independent tribes'.[771] Much of the territory under consideration had not been mapped at that time and the internal debate of the government of India pointed to the acknowledgement that 'precise delineation' was impossible.[772] Roberts notably remarked that: 'We are too ignorant of the geography of the districts and limits of the tribes to lay down an exact frontier'.[773] Thus, once the demarcation was to be proceeded with, an 'investigation on the spot' was to be carried out, 'for the purpose of deciding, e.g. what are the de facto limits of the Waziri occupation'.[774] In fact, the assistant quartermaster general, Edmond Roche Elles, stressed 'the importance of avoiding specifying geographical limits whenever the country has not been regularly mapped by the Survey Department; in such cases tribes only should be named'.[775]

The government of India claimed exclusive relations with certain tribes, which were determined before the negotiations. However, the use of the principle of ethnological continuity left the door open for claiming more lands during the actual demarcation of the border, when geographical limits of the tribes were investigated on the ground. At the same time, the government insisted on proving the history of Afghan relations with the tribes as a complementary criterion for determining the amir's claims over the area. Tupper argued that the Zaimusht tribe for example, should be included in the British sphere of influence because of 'their close connection with our border and its officers'. On the contrary, the Jadrans should be left to the amir because the governor of Khost, Shirindil Khan, had been operating against them.[776] Another example regarded the Mohmands, some sections of which 'enjoy allowances from us and whose relations with Kabul are described by Mr. Merk as "merely pretence", while other sections 'receive allowances from, or are in very close relations with, the Khan of Lalpura, he, in his own turn, being a feudatory of the Amir'.[777] Similarly, in the much disputed case of Waziristan, the government argued that it should fall within its own sphere of influence because the Waziri tribe had

[771] 'Nos. 329-334'., K.W. p. 2
[772] Ibid., K.W. p. 2.
[773] Ibid., sec. K.W. p. 2.
[774] Ibid., K.W. p. 4.
[775] Ibid., sec. 329A.
[776] Ibid., sec. 331 p. 3-4.
[777] Ibid. p. 4.

'never been under the suzerainty of any Amir'.[778] Thus, in the delimitation of Afghanistan's eastern frontier, the government of India combined tribe and geography in its assertion of sovereign claims over Afghanistan's land. However, while in 1884 the principle of tribal continuity and occupation had been used to assert the amir's sovereign claims over the disputed border areas of Maimena, in 1894 the same principle was employed to curtail Afghan territorial claims.

The demarcation of the Durand line did not so much display British India's imperial policy as the policy pursued towards Afghanistan itself. In the negotiations taking place in Kabul and in the debates within the government of India, it became clear that Russia's advance was not at the centre of British concerns. In fact, reference to the strategic implications of the frontier *vis-à-vis* Russian movements in Central Asia was limited. As a potential threat for India, Russia did have a role in defining British India's Afghanistan policy, but, as pointed out in chapter one, it was not a central one. Throughout these decades, British India was concerned with the extent to which it could limit the expansion of Afghan influence eastwards, while pushing its own influence into Afghanistan. On the contrary, the insertion of the debate within imperial and diplomatic history has made it difficult to grasp how the North-West Frontier came into being and why British India felt the need to interpose a tribal zone between its domains and those of the amir. As chapter one has shown, in the 1870s the government of India believed that a Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan was unlikely. By the 1880s and 1890s Russia had made decided steps forward in Central Asia. By 1885 it had become contiguous with Afghanistan. However, the prominence of a few loud voices, such as Henry Rawlinson, should not lead us to think that the entirety of the British establishment, especially in India, shared the preoccupations over a Russian advance.[779] The scholarship has largely reproduced the colonial narrative of Russia as an expansionary empire, threatening India's security, and a defensive British India, merely trying to secure its external frontiers.[780] However, if placed into the context of British India's century-long history of expansion towards the north-west, and its relation with the native states of India, the demarcation of the Durand line seems less a defensive enterprise than an expansionist endeavour. The literature has often failed to distinguish between ideas

[778] 'Nos. 193-217', K.W. No. 3 p. 6.
[779] Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East*.
[780] Lamb, 'Studying the Frontiers of the British Indian Empire'.

presented in accounts, treaties and pamphlets published for public use and the papers concerning the debates within the government. In these debates preoccupations were certainly raised but the degree to which they informed British policies towards Afghanistan is questionable. Thus, the settling of the Durand line by the government of India seems to point much more decisively towards this frontier falling into a logic of containing Afghanistan itself and limiting the latter's attempts to extend its influence eastwards. As pointed out above, in the debates in 1891 and 1892 the government of India did not stress the frontier's defensive function but its centrality for British India's relations with Afghanistan and the continuation of its own expansionary policy.

Conclusion

The demarcation of the Durand line showed that by the end of the nineteenth century the colonial state in the subcontinent continued to engage in the expansion of its borders. Despite proclamations to the contrary in the wake of the 1857 mutiny, the government of India continued to devise strategies to extend its influence into British India's north-west. Expansion in this phase of more mature colonialism was characterised by a use of blurred ideas of sovereignty, indirect rule and local mediators that was comparable to the earlier Company expansion in India. However, by the end of the nineteenth century these strategies were partially institutionalised into a legal framework that explained and justified further expansion. The key element of British expansion into Afghanistan in this period was, similarly to the early Company days, the maintenance of blurred relations with the native polities located on its trajectory of annexation and extension of influence. Relations with Afghanistan, the tribal areas, the polities of Chitral, Dir, Kashmir were never formally defined. Crucially, it was this indeterminacy that allowed for further attempts at expansion well into the 1890s. Non-interference continued to be a fiction the colonial state tried to circumvent in all possible ways. In practice the government of India continued to push for greater access to Afghanistan through railways, telegraphs and British agents. At the same time, Anglo-Afghan relations implied an understanding of Afghanistan as integral part of the empire. The colonial state continually attempted to extend imperial paramountcy over the area that extended to the Oxus river or Afghanistan's north-western frontier demarcated in 1884-7. In the space in between

this imperial frontier and the administrative frontier of the Punjab the colonial state played with different layers of sovereignty.

India was integral part of the period of expansion the British empire underwent in the 1890s.[781] Accordingly, the making of the Durand frontier was seen by the colonial state in India as an enterprise comparable to the making of other frontiers around the empire, which looked outwards towards semi-independent native polities in a similar way. Especially the annexation of upper Burma in 1885 demonstrated that, similarly to the Afghan case, territorial claims could still be made by the colonial state eschewing the norms of Westphalian territoriality.[782] In the African continent the frontiers of the empire were pushed forward through the extension of indirect forms of control and influence, in a similar way to how the government of India tried to incorporate Afghanistan. These different imperial settings showed that these strategies were widely employed and continued to be acceptable: at the end of the nineteenth century the colonial state continued to be comfortable with forms of sovereignty and territoriality that eluded Westphalian norms.

[781] Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 2004.
[782] Eric Tagliacozzo, 'Ambiguous Commodities, Unstable Frontiers: The Case of Burma, Siam, and Imperial Britain, 1800–1900', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 2 (April 2004).

Chapter five and conclusion

Amir Abdur Rahman's state-building in Hazarajat: the long reach of British India's colonial intervention in Afghanistan, 1884-1900

In the 1890s amir Abdur Rahman was extending his authority over new areas. As seen in chapter three, by the mid-1890s the government of Kabul had incorporated Maimena, Turkestan and Badakhshan into its territories. These were areas that had been assigned to the Afghan state through the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern borders led by the government of India. In the 1880s, as seen in chapter four, the government of Kabul attempted to expand its authority eastwards. In this process the Lalpura and upper Mohmand country, Kunar, Shinwar and parts of Kafiristan were brought under the control of Kabul. Abdur Rahman tried to extend his rule further east into Bajaur, Dir and Swat but the equally expansionist policy of the government of India halted his plans. The demarcation of the Durand line in 1893 definitely put a limit to the government of Kabul's territorial expansion.[783] In 1890 the amir reached out to the Hazaras of inner Hazarajat – Urzagan, Ajaristan, Malistan, Dahla, Zawli, Dai Chopan – and asked them to 'submit to the government'.[784] While they initially agreed to do so, in 1891 they rebelled against the government of Kabul. The reasons for the rebellion are not entirely clear but Kakar points out that they were probably linked to the government of Kabul not respecting an initial agreement for tax exemption and political autonomy of the Hazaras.[785] In the spring of 1893 the troops of the government of Kabul crushed the rebellion and the government proceeded to the settlement of the area.[786]

Until the 1890s, inner Hazarajat – particularly Urzagan which was at the centre of the amir's military campaign – had been a region largely independent from the administrations of Kabul and Kandahar. Before the reign of amir Abdur Rahman, political and tributary relations between the government of Kabul and Hazarajat's outer regions had been weak and intermittent. Major Molloy, the army officer in

[783] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 63–86.
[784] Ibid., 130.
[785] Ibid.
[786] Ibid., 130–38.

The Hazarajat[787]

charge of the exiled Mustaufi Habibulla Khan, argued that 'the political relations of the Hazarajat with Kabul are decidedly anomalous, some of the tribes are wholly independent, whilst others acknowledge the authority of the Amir and pay revenue. Their allegiance however is enforced, and they are always ready to throw it off when opportunity offers'.[788] Since the early nineteenth century, the government of Kabul had succeeded in gradually drawing Hazarajat's outskirts into its orbit and, by 1883,

[787] Ibid., 121.
[788] 'Nos. 312-319, Report on the Hazarajat, Herat, Tokhi, Ghilzais, and Kabul District', September 1883, sec. 316, Foreign Department, A-Political-E, NAI.

only the Hazaristan, Deh-Kundi and Urzagan regions were defined as independent.[789] These areas were inhabited by the 'independent tribes' of the Malistan Hazaras, the Fualadi, Kalandar, Deh Chopan, Chula-Kur, Bab Ali, Dar Afshan Hazaras.[790] Molloy pointed out that since the time of Ahmed Shah Durrani, the founder of the Durrani kingdom in the mid-eighteenth century, who managed to enforce revenue payment on the whole of Hazarajat, the region as a whole has never paid revenue.[791] After the collapse of the Durrani kingdom at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the amir's collection of revenue in Hazarajat had been discontinuous, 'but after Amir Dost Muhammad had succeeded in establishing himself in power, he extracted revenue from some of the frontier tribes of the Hazarajat; those in fact most accessible to Kabul; and his successors [Sher Ali Khan and Yakub Khan] seem to have been content to do no more than this'.[792] Molloy's report further stated that the Deh Zangi and the Behsud Hazaras, paid their revenue to Kabul.[793] The extension of the government of Kabul's influence over semi-independent areas had seldom involved direct government and the permanent stationing of governmental representatives in the region.[794] Indeed, the amirs had been content with establishing suzerain relations with these areas. These involved the payment of tribute as a symbol of submission to the amir, sporadic taxation and the recognition of the amir's overlordship through symbolic acts of loyalty, such as the reading of the Friday *khutba* in the ruler's name.

As chapter three has shown, the settlement of previously independent and semi-independent areas by the government of Kabul had gone hand in hand with colonial boundary making. The case of the Afghan Boundary Commission of 1884-7 showed that British boundary commissioners succeeded in influencing local Afghan administrators towards the adoption of administrative reforms which redrew the social landscape of Maimena along ethnic lines. This chapter argues that in Hazarajat the government of Kabul employed ideas and practices of state-building that mimicked those first experimented with on occasion of the incorporation of the Maimena region, and which were subsequently picked up in the settlement of Turkestan and Badakhshan following the demarcation of their borders. However, in Hazarajat, while

[789] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*.
[790] 'Nos. 312-319, Report on the Hazarajat, Herat, Tokhi, Ghilzais, and Kabul District', sec. 316.
[791] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 46–51.
[792] 'Nos. 312-319, Report on the Hazarajat, Herat, Tokhi, Ghilzais, and Kabul District', sec. 316; Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 46–51.
[793] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*.
[794] Ibid.

the government of Kabul reproduced many of the patterns that the British had experimented with along Afghanistan's borders, for the first time it applied these to a region that was disconnected from colonial boundary-making.

This thesis has shown that the second Afghan war and the subsequent British-led boundary commissions became powerful instruments for the adoption of colonial ideas of state-building and Afghan sociology into local political and social structures. In the north-west, as chapter three has shown, the policies of state-building employed by the government of Kabul were the result of the close collaboration between British officials, local chiefs and Afghan officials. The British commissioners were able to introduce notions of Western statehood and direct the government of Kabul's annexation of the area towards a model of sovereign political relations. The settlement of Maimena discontinued the established pattern of suzerain relations based on symbolic allegiance and occasional tribute payment. In the aftermath of the demarcation, stable, rather than sporadic, revenue extraction had been used by the amir to establish more direct interference and control over Afghanistan's provincial affairs. At the same time, the ethnic and sectarian criteria that had underpinned the partition of land between Russia and Afghanistan similarly became part of the government of Kabul's pattern of internal state building. In the long term, they were incorporated by the government of Kabul as principles for the government of the Afghan provinces. Thus, colonial boundary-making inextricably linked the ethnological criteria employed with the reach of the amir's sovereignty. Through the series of Anglo-Afghan encounters in the 1880-90s the ideas and practices that emerged out of the definition of Afghanistan's geographical existence were formalised into a body of knowledge that became the backbone of the government of Kabul's independent state-building.

The case of Hazarajat showed that by the 1890s colonial ideas of state-building and of Afghan sociology had travelled a long way after the end of the Afghan Boundary Commission in 1887. In the restructuring of the Afghan state, the government of India's insistence on sovereign relations as key markers of the amir's authority had assumed a life of its own. In the framework of Afghanistan's internal state-building, modern notions of statehood and sociological criteria had become key components in the amir's gradual extension of its sovereign authority towards Afghanistan's Central Asian frontiers. At the same time, as chapter four has shown,

the British colonial state in India continued to use conceptions of statehood that diverged from the Westphalian model; indeed, they often went into the opposite direction, as the case of the Durand line has shown. In that case, the government of India attempted to maintain the Indo-Afghan border blurred and undefined as long as possible, actively resisting its demarcation. The amir on the contrary, insisted on the application of territoriality and sovereignty as criteria for the establishment of an international border.

The literature on Abdur Rahman's military campaigns in Hazarajat and the subsequent annexation of this region is extremely limited. Scholars have stressed that Abdur Rahman's policies toward the Hazaras in the 1880s were heavily informed by sectarian ideas. The years following the second Afghan war, this literature has argued, state policies systematically subjugated and marginalised this community. In the same period, the Qizilbash, another Shia minority community, lost considerably in terms of status and economic power. Hassan Kakar has notably argued that Abdur Rahman Khan 'was the first ruler to pursue a systematic anti-Shi'ite policy in Afghanistan', illustrated especially in the extension of government control over Hazarajat.[795] These scholars have argued that the annexation of Hazarajat was a sectarian war, a perspective the amir himself tried to convey.[796] The forced re-settlement of parts of the Hazara population, and the settlement of Pashtuns and Tajiks in Hazara majority areas following the amir's conquest of the region, gave further form to the changing relation between Pashtuns and Hazaras. Within this framework of sectarian divisions, other authors have highlighted the Hazarajat war as a struggle to impose the amir's government over peripheral non-state actors.[797] However, what is missing from these works is a closer analysis of the motives that triggered the annexation of this region by the amir. Scholars have also remained largely silent about the actual strategies adopted by the amir to incorporate Hazarajat into what was becoming the Afghan state. Rather than approaching this episode of Afghan history in isolation, this chapter looks at it as part of the longer history of Anglo-Afghan interactions, which, as this

[795] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 158.
[796] Hassan Poladi, *The Hazāras*, 1st ed (Stockton, Calif: Mughal Pub. Co., 1989); Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998).
[797] Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*; Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*.

thesis has pointed out, were crucial in the development of the Afghan state in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This chapter questions whether sect is a useful rubric to understand the interaction between the government of Kabul and the Hazara communities. In fact, while there are many documented instances of violent episodes against Hazaras in Herat and Kabul during the war, primary sources show a less coherent picture. The amir's general, Abdul Kuddus Khan, governor of Shiberghan and one of the officers in charge of the military operations in Hazarajat, reported that outside of the city of Kandahar the Pashtun population did not support the war and refused to supply the amir's troops with provisions.[798] While there was a strong element of propaganda in the government of Kabul's approach to the Hazarajat war, which gave the occupation of Urzagan a sectarian undertone, it never assumed the contours of a Pashtun national war. On the contrary, this chapter suggests that the relation between the government of Kabul and the non-Pashtun minorities, in this case the Hazaras, should be understood in political terms. I point out that the rationale behind the invasion of Hazarajat was the extension of forms of direct control and stable means of taxation. Thus, if compared to earlier attempts at extending authority and taxation over other parts of Hazarajat, what changed fundamentally with the 1892 annexation was not the extension of governmental authority *per se* but the modalities through which the government of Kabul achieved closer control over the area.

From the outset of its intervention in Hazarajat, the government tried to implement a form of government that established sovereign state authority over what had been an independent region. This chapter discusses the government of Kabul's annexation of the Hazarajat region from the point of view of land revenue patterns. It shows that the extension of the amir's authority over the region went hand in hand with the imposition of more direct revenue relations and the reformation of the local revenue system. Shifting revenue relations in Hazarajat were part of a broader Afghan-wide trend, which transformed the government of Kabul's relations with the surrounding provinces from suzerain to sovereign: irregular tax collection and often symbolic acts of allegiance were substituted for more institutionalised forms of revenue extraction. The government of Kabul's policies adopted in the aftermath of

[798] 'Nos. 489-517, Kandahar News-Letters Nos. 11 to 20 of 1892', June 1892, 513, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.

the annexation are discussed in the wider framework of Anglo-Afghan relations in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reconfiguration of local leadership showed that criteria of ethnic and sectarian difference did matter. In fact, they were at the basis for the curtailment of local tribal heads and the imposition of Afghan administrators and governors appointed from Kabul. This chapter draws a comparison with the Afghan Boundary Commission of 1884-7 and shows that the Hazara community continued to be viewed by the government of Kabul as a potential access point for British India's attempts at gaining more influence in Afghanistan. Thus, the application of ethnically minded policies, especially the resettlement of Pashtun communities on Hazara lands, was informed by the government of India's establishment of privileged relations with Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities.

In the annexation of Hazarajat, Abdur Rahman replaced established ways of enforcing allegiance to the rulers of Kabul through symbolic or occasional tributes with a more direct way of government. He extended tributary relations beyond the immediate outskirts of this region and pushed them into Urzagan. The attempt to extract revenue from the Hazaras of Urzagan showed that the government of Kabul was envisioning more permanent and stable relations with this area, which discontinued previous patterns of irregular and intermittent links. However, this attempt to extend new types of political relations clashed with the Hazara chiefs' understanding of their political relations with the government of Kabul. In September 1892 the Hazaras 'entirely decline[d] to admit Afghan troops into their country, although [they were] willing to pay [the] Amir tribute in kind, horses and sheep'.[799] They initially resisted the presence of the government's troops and representatives in their territory and it was only through the intervention of the army that this resistance could eventually be overcome. After Sardar Abdul Kudus Khan's initial victory over the Hazaras in the area between Urzagan and Shah-tus, the Hazara *mirs*, Mir Muhammad Hosein of Kundi and Mir Muhammad Akbar of Deh Chakni, went to the Sardar to proclaim their allegiance to the amirship of Abdur Rahman Khan. They stated that they could not comply with the amir's requests of 'stationing of troops in

[799] 'Nos. 487-538, Rebellion of the Hazaras against the Amir of Afghanistan, and Reported Capture of Urzagan by the Afghans', October 1892, sec. 508, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.

the Hazara country, the 'payment of cash revenue' and a 'tax on marriages'.[800] The Hazara chiefs did not object to the amir's troops raising revenue in the Hazarajat but to the modalities with which this was carried out. They objected to the changes in their relations with the government of Kabul, which the different form of assessment and collection of revenue brought with it. They asked the representative of the government of Kabul to:

> collect from them the revenue in kind, *viz.* horses, ghee (jowal) falasis and carpets. They suggested that the Hakim with two or three hundred Khassadars should annually go to the Hazara country where the Mirs would assemble, and having collected the revenue in kind would make it over to the Hakim who should after receiving it go back.[801]

The inhabitants of Urzagan and their mirs understood revenue extraction by the amirs of Kabul still as a temporary and intermittent process. They argued in favour of a tribute in kind and a light and non-permanent presence of governmental representatives in their territories. The amir dismissed the application for this type of relations as 'false and groundless'.[802] Before 1892, the revenue collection had been conducted every year through an official 'specially deputed to each tribe from Kabul'. This official stayed on site for four to six months, 'during which time he moves about from place to place as circumstances necessitate'.[803] As one British news writer pointed out: 'When Dost Muhammad was ruler of Kabul, his son, the late Amir, then Hakim of Ghazni, took a force into the Jaghuri country for the purpose of exacting revenue'.[804] However, the annexation of Urzagan to the government of Kabul brought about new forms of tributary relations with the local Hazara community that discontinued earlier practices.

In Urzagan the government of Kabul implemented a form of revenue extraction that followed a general tendency towards more direct forms of revenue relations. Kakar has argued that from around 1885 the government of Kabul introduced a shift from the *jam'bast* to the *kot* system of land revenue assessment. Moreover, in the 1890s the government implemented the re-surveying of cultivable land in many provinces, aimed at increasing taxable areas of land. This was

[800] 'Nos. 628-701, Rising of the Urzagan Hazaras against the Amir of Afghanistan', September 1892, sec. 676, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[801] Ibid.
[802] Ibid., 676.
[803] 'Nos. 312-319, Report on the Hazarajat, Herat, Tokhi, Ghilzais, and Kabul District', 316.
[804] Ibid.

undertaken also in the areas where the government of Kabul's control was stronger. In the Kandahar province, for example, this involved the extension of revenue collection over wasteland, such as that belonging to the Durranis of Pusht-i-Rud.[805] Under the *kot* or *se-kot* fixed shares of the gross produce were destined to the government treasury, one out of three in the case of the *se-kot.*[806] The *jam'bast* system entailed the assessment of revenue on the basis of a tribal community considered as a whole.[807] While under Sher Ali both the *se-kot* and the *jam'bast* systems of revenue were employed, Abdur Rahman extended the use of the former. He largely discontinued the devolution of the collection of revenue to contractors, which had been the main system until well into Sher Ali Khan's reign. While in earlier decades, 'government officials [had] played a minor role in revenue collection', Abdur Rahman appointed *ad hoc* officials for the collection of revenue.[808] Thus, in Hazarajat the government of Kabul introduced new forms of revenue assessment and appointed new administrators. These changes triggered long-term structural changes in the region's political and social landscape in a way that reflected the earlier developments in Maimena.

The shift towards more direct forms of revenue extraction was part of a broader shift in the government of Kabul's understanding of state authority and of its relations with the provinces. It testified to an attempt to shift relations between the government of Kabul and the provinces from suzerain to sovereign, in which the local intermediaries, who had been in charge of collecting the revenue on a largely autonomous basis, were bypassed in favour of a more stable collection of land revenue managed directly by Kabul. The decentralised forms of revenue extraction employed until Shere Ali Khan's reign had underpinned equally decentralised forms of governance by the amirs of Kabul. Until the 1850-60s, the enforcement of revenue payment still led to the creation of local jagirs, in which land was given out to local chiefs for revenue farming. For example, in the case of the Aldai section of the Hazaras in the region of Kara Bagh, land had been 'made over by Amir Dost Muhammad Khan as a grant to the estate of Mirza Muhammad Hussain Khan, a

[805] 'Nos. 489-517', 501.
[806] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 74.
[807] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*; Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 19, 248.
[808] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 76–77.

Kizzilbash Sardar'.[809] In case of political instability, such as on the occasion of amir Shah Shuja's accession to the throne in 1832, these loose forms of governance had caused significant shifts in political balances and the repeated loss of areas beyond the Kabul province. In these cases, local governors, who had complete control over provincial revenues, discontinued the payment of taxes and the military support to the amir's government, thus *de facto* curtailing their ties with the government of Kabul.[810]

In the 1890s, the reform of the land revenue system introduced by Abdur Rahman brought about more stable revenue relations with the provinces and went hand in hand with new ways of governing the provinces and engaging the role of local political elites. Historians of India have argued for a relationship between land tenure and revenue systems, and their influence over social patterns.[811] Eric Stokes has suggested a clear link between economic conditions on the ground – 'the distinction between regions of secure and insecure agriculture and their corresponding contrasts in population density' – and diversification of forms of land tenure as well as 'caste differentiation and social distance'.[812] Indeed, the amir's officials aimed at implementing stable and permanent tributary relations. Hazarajat was broken up into nine districts and attached to already existing provinces.[813] The force stationed in Urzagan was, according to the amir, 'destined for the collection of revenue according to the system current in Kandahar and Herat'.[814] Thus, following the annexation the government of Kabul integrated the Hazarajat into the systems of revenue of the more established provinces of the Afghan state.

In Urzagan the government of Kabul followed policies informed by considerations of ethnic and sectarian difference, which reproduced those first applied in Maimena. In chapter two, I showed that the Hazaras, although not the ones inhabiting Urzagan, had been involved with the British occupation force in 1879-80 in an attempt to curb opposition to the British government of Kabul that was gathering in Ghazni. During the A.B.C., British boundary commissioners had cooperated with local minorities, such as the Jamshidis, in order to establish local alliances that

[809] 'Nos. 312-319, Report on the Hazarajat, Herat, Tokhi, Ghilzais, and Kabul District', 316.
[810] Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, 269.
[811] Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India*, Cambridge South Asian Studies 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.
[812] Ibid., 7, 54.
[813] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 126.
[814] 'Nos. 628-701, Rising of the Urzagan Hazaras Agaist the Amir of Afghanistan.', September 1892, 676, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.

bypassed the officials of the government of Kabul. In the aftermath of the second Afghan war, the government of India had maintained its links with the Hazaras through informal news writers and their enlistment in the Indian army.

The cooperation the government of India had sought with local ethnic and religious minorities during the second Afghan war and the A.B.C. influenced the government of Kabul's policies in Hazarajat. The full reach of British India's privileged relations with Afghan minority groups can be seen in the fact that during the first phases of the invasion of Hazarajat the British news agents in Kandahar reported that from various accounts the Hazaras were convinced the British had occupied Kandahar as a move to help them to force out the Afghan invasion.[815] At the same time, the Hazaras were reaching out to the British government for help against the government of Kabul on the basis of their previous collaboration. For instance, a group of Hazaras contacted the British representative in Baluchistan, the agent to the governor-general, to demand the assistance of the government of India during the Afghan occupation of Urzagan. In this case, the government of India did not respond to the request. In September 1892, the foreign secretary pointed out to the British officer in Baluchistan that the government of India could not 'interfere authoritatively' because it was 'bound not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan'.[816] Thus, previous colonial interference with the Hazara community mattered in defining the government of Kabul's policies towards this area.

In the case of the Hazaras of Karabagh and the Jamshidis of Maimena the government of India had tried to establish alternative networks of contact and governance that bypassed the official channels of the government of Kabul, undermining the latter's authority. In both cases, once the representatives of the government of India had left the area, the government of Kabul marginalised those communities that had acted as privileged partners of the British authorities. Similarly, in the case of the demarcation of the Durand line, as seen in chapter four, the government of Kabul was worried that the increasing contacts the government of India was establishing with the Kafirs could lead to further British territorial annexations, thus weakening the political relations of the government of Kabul with this border region. In the case of Hazarajat, the previous contacts this community had

[815] 'Nos. 279-282, Account given by One Mir Husain Beg, Urzagan Hazara, Regarding the Recent Disturbances in the Hazarajat', May 1894, 279, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[816] 'Nos. 487-538', 508.

entertained with British authorities were seen as a potential source of further British interference, a view confirmed by the *Siraj al-Tawarikh*.[817] Hazarajat, although not a border area in the geographical sense of the term, became for the government of Kabul an internal frontier: it was perceived as an area that could potentially elude the authority of the amir and shift its allegiance to the government of India by virtue of their previous cooperation.

For the government of India, the Hazaras continued to be viewed as potential partners in the case political instability in Afghanistan called for more direct British interference in the amir's domains, a possibility which the government of India never ruled out completely. During the A.B.C. British commissioners had also pushed for the long-term presence of British officers along Afghanistan's borders, arguing that this was the only way to guarantee the amir's control over these minority groups, as pointed out in chapter three. Thus, British authorities portrayed the inability of the amir to govern the Hazaras as a justification for the stationing of British officials in Afghan territory. At the same time, they had used the Hazaras to undermine the amir's rule and establish British influence in the country. Abdur Rahman was aware of the Hazaras' understanding of British India as a special friend and guarantor of their position in Afghanistan, as their requests for help during the Hazarajat war demonstrated. The amir was concerned that these long-term relations between the Hazaras and British India could lead to the latter's renewed attempt at establishing a physical foothold in Afghanistan, much the same way the British commissioners had attempted to do in Maimena. Thus, in Urzagan considerations around security of the area from foreign interference and loyalty of the local populations, which had been at the basis of the resettling of Pashtun families to Maimena, were again at the centre of the amir's concerns.

The policies applied by the government of Kabul in Hazarajat brought about significant changes in the political relations between the government of Kabul and the Hazara *mirs* and triggered changes to the local balance of power. The government of Kabul made use of local intermediaries to gain access to the Hazara lands, but substituted key local leaders with administrators appointed from Kabul. Initially, the government attempted to win over the main Hazara chiefs and to effect a settlement of

[817] Kātib Hazārah, *The History of Afghanistan*; Cited in Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 130.

the area through their intercession. In 1894, Mir Husain Beg, an informant of the government of India, reported that initially the amir had secured the collaboration of an influential Hazara chief through whom an army was permitted to enter the country in 1892 under the guidance of Sardar Abdul Kudus Khan and Brigadier Zebardast Khan, the two leading generals of the government of Kabul. However, once there, the army took possession of the forts in the area and disarmed the Hazaras. Subsequently, the government of Kabul appointed the officers in charge of the military operations as governors of Urzagan. As in the case of Maimena, where general Ghaus-ud-din Khan had been left in charge of the local administration after the region's annexation, in Hazarajat, as the British news writer reported, 'General Sher Muhammad Khan has been relieved from military duties, and has been appointed Hakim of Urzagan and the Hazara passes. He has been ordered to bring some families of his Andari tribe, and of other Ghilzais, with a view to settling them in the Hazara country and the passes in the direction of Ghazni and Shilgar'.[818] Thus, the amir swept away local Hazara headmen – who had acted as middlemen in the invasion of the country – in favour of an administration run by officials of the government of Kabul.

The changes in the local leadership of the Hazara community went hand in hand with a process of resettlement of Pashtun communities, which drew on practices that had first been employed in the aftermath of the A.B.C. On that occasion, the practice of resettling entire communities of Jamshidis and their replacement with Pashtun groups became an integral part of the government of Kabul's extension of authority over new areas. In fact, following the Maimena boundary demarcation, Kakar has pointed out, similar practices were adopted also in Turkestan, Balkh, Qataghan and Herat throughout the 1880-90s.[819] Along Afghanistan's borders, the amir implemented a vast programme of resettlement of Pashtun families, which had a lasting impact on the ethnographic outlook of entire areas and permanently changed local social and economic structures as cultivable lands were given to the Pashtun settlers. In Maimena, these arrangements had reworked landed relations in favour of the newcomers, who were given the lands left 'virtually' empty by the settlement of the Turkmen tribes to Russian territory. In both Maimena and Hazarajat, the repopulation policy adopted was also motivated by the sedentarization of nomadic

[818] 'Nos. 28-45, Rebellion of the Hazaras against the Amir of Afghanistan', December 1892, 41, Foreign Department, Secret F, NAI.
[819] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 127.

populations, such as the Nasiri Pashtuns who were given lands in Urzagan. With the adoption of this policy, on the one hand, the government of Kabul aimed at exerting closer control over land use and revenue collection. On the other, the redrawing of the region's ethnographic landscape impacted relations between Pashtun and non-Pashtun ethnic groups in the years to come.

In the administrative settlement of Maimena, the government of Kabul had redirected the administrative functions of local tribal chiefs and established Afghan administrators to newly appointed figures. In this process, local chiefs, such as Yalantush Khan, had been imprisoned by the government of Kabul and removed from the area, while their position within their community was given to his younger brother. Similarly, in Hazarajat the government of Kabul tried to erase dominant local leaders from the political hierarchy in favour of less prominent branches of their community. Kakar has pointed out that, during the military operations in Urzagan, the Amir 'was willing to pardon [the Hazaras] provided they disposed of their *mirs*'.[820] During the annexation of Maimena, the more prominent chiefs, such as Yalantush Khan, had been *de facto* removed from their positions, while other leading figures from the same tribe were appointed in their stead. In the case of Hazarajat, certain strata of the local elites and populations were drawn into the structures of the Kabul-run state that was being established in Hazarajat: the Hazara 'Sardars and Mirs [got] reasonable salaries and the Maliks [were given] Malikana (rights) according to existing rules from our (the Amir's) office (Daftar Khana)'.[821] In addition, the government also proceeded to the enlistment of 'young men fit for service' from among the Hazaras, to be 'taken into Government service'.[822] While local men were drawn into the state structures, not all of the Hazara chiefs were given appointments. Before the revolt, the amir had sent *kazis* to the country to:

> administer justice according to the Muhammadan law and to spread Islamism among the people. The Mujtahids of Hazara gave out that His Highness [the amir] was interfering in their religion, and at the same time their leading men got fixed allowances, and did not get hukumat like the Besud Hazaras; this instigated the people to rise, which proved a great loss to them.[823]

[820] Ibid., 134.
[821] 'Nos. 628-701', September 1892, sec. 676.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid., sec. 648.

The Hazara chiefs involved in the settlement of the local administration resented the selective appointments decided by the government of Kabul, which conceded them allowances but did not retain them in actual government service, thus *de facto* depriving them from any political power. Kakar has shown that Abdur Rahman's reign was characterised by a closer reliance on new men as local administrators. Dost Muhammad Khan had entrusted considerable power to the sardars, the heads of the Durrani clans, and appointed them as provincial governors, a policy that British authorities picked up during the occupation of Kandahar as seen in chapter two. However, Abdur Rahman 'completely modified the role of the sardars by banishing and killing the more ambitious sardars and by making the rest dependent on the state'.[824] During his reign, 'the sardars lost their former military power and they moved permanently to Kabul without their followers, whereas in the past they had rarely visited the court'.[825] Thus, as in Maimena, in Hazarajat the strategies adopted by the government in dealing with local elites pointed to the selective empowerment of certain sections of the local population, combined with the curtailment of existing leaderships in favour of alliances with less powerful figures, whose allegiance could be more easily secured.

The annexation of Hazarajat shows how colonial ideas of state-building and Afghan ethnic and sectarian groups were used by the government of Kabul in the administrative settlement of an area that was outside of the purview of British-led boundary making. While boundary making was the main ground through which British influence could seep into the structures of the Afghan state that was being formed at the end of the nineteenth century, the Hazarajat case showed that by the 1890s the colonial influences had been effectively incorporated into the functioning of the modern Afghan polity. Similar to those regions where boundary making had led to annexation, in Urzagan the extension of the government of Kabul's authority triggered changes in the local political hierarchies and in the social structure. The appointment of Afghan officials as administrators of the area dismantled traditional leadership and permanently changed local structures of rule. At the same time, the resettlement of Pashtun communities from southern Afghanistan to Maimena lastingly redrew the social landscape of the region along ethnic lines.

[824] Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*, 23, 24.
[825] Ibid.

Historians of Afghanistan have widely argued that the amir's reforms and his project of centralization underpinned a wider attempt to crush the traditional elites, the religious establishment and what Kakar calls the 'tribal elders'. Kakar has argued that Abdur Rahman Khan was the first amir of Afghanistan to 'rule the country directly through government officials' rather than relying on the representatives of the country's 'autonomous communities'.[826] This research has confirmed this in the cases of Maimena and Hazarajat and has also shown that Afghan encounters with the representatives of the government of India had a significant role in engineering political and social change at the local level. The strategies of annexation adopted by the government of Kabul in Maimena and Hazarajat demonstrated that taxation and the extension of the Kabul-run administrative system contributed to the establishment of new forms of political hierarchy, in which chiefs who had traditionally held authority were dispossessed through the medium of selective governmental appointments. At the same time, those minor chiefs who were included in the new governmental set-up, were given new positions of authority. Thus, the annexation of Hazarajat should be seen as the government of Kabul's effort to extend a form of sovereign authority comparable with the one the Afghan Boundary Commission of 1884-7 had pushed the local Afghan officials to adopt in Maimena. Hazarajat, although not a border area strictly speaking, was seen by the government of Kabul as another frontier of potential British interference in its territory and affairs. Together with the annexation of Turkestan and Badakhshan, the cases of Maimena and Hazarajat showed that in these decades the government of Kabul was developing a coherent system of managing its frontier areas.

Conclusion

This thesis has studied the different strategies the government of India designed between 1869 and 1900 to make Afghanistan into a subordinate polity that could be influenced and controlled. Chapter one analysed how in the 1870s the government of India's conceptualisation of Afghanistan changed from that of an independent native polity on British India's borders to that of a dependent native state included within the broader framework of empire. The deterioration of Anglo-Afghan relations in the late 1870s, following the amir of Afghanistan's refusal to comply with British demands of a residency system in his territory, led to the invasion of Afghanistan in November

[826] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 63.

1878. The government of India occupied Kandahar and annexed a number of Afghan districts along the Indo-Afghan border. In June 1879 it forced the appointment of a British resident at the Kabuli court. As seen in chapter two, the murder of the British resident by a mutinous regiment of the Afghan army triggered a second British invasion of the country and the establishment at Kabul and Kandahar of British-led administrations.

Between 1879 and 1881, British authorities in charge of the administration of the two cities used forms of direct and indirect rule to carve out two separate polities in southern and northern Afghanistan, which were envisioned as two princely states subsumed under British paramountcy. By the summer of 1881 this project collapsed: the government of India appointed Abdur Rahman Khan as new amir of Kabul and withdrew its occupation. After the war, the Afghan Boundary Commission of 1884-7 was the major moment of close Anglo-Afghan interaction. As seen in chapter three, the Commission demarcated Afghanistan's northern border in Maimena, between the rivers Oxus and Murghab. The long presence of the British commissioners in the region became an occasion for the development of strategies of influence-building at the local level that impacted the administration and social landscape that emerged in Maimena after the end of the demarcation. The A.B.C. became the stepping stone for the demarcation of Afghanistan's other 'external' boundaries towards Russian-controlled Central Asia during the 1880 and 1890s: Turkestan, Badakhshan and Wakhan. Afghanistan's eastern border towards British India was also demarcated in the same years, but assumed a very different status from the northern borders. Chapter four has shown that what became known as the Durand Line was understood by the government of India as an internal or regional border, not an international border demarcating sovereign polities. The amir had pushed for its demarcation in the first place, while British India wanted to maintain the blurred and uncertain situation that had characterised its north-western borderlands as a way to push its influence and territorial claims further into Afghanistan.

This chapter has argued that in the last decades of the nineteenth century the government of India succeeded in positioning the Afghan polity in a subordinate position *vis-à-vis* British India. It devised different strategies to interfere, directly and indirectly, in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, attempting to make Afghanistan into a native polity comparable to the Indian princely states. However, Afghanistan eluded

British attempts to establish a strong physical presence in the country: after 1881 the court of Kabul and the government of India maintained official links through the exchange of vakils. At the same time, British India also kept a number of more or less formal news writers in Kabul, Herat, Kandahar and in other parts of the country. The inability to subsume Afghanistan into the sphere of British paramountcy through established strategies of indirect rule, forced the government of India to find alternative ways. The government of India continuously attempted to make empire beyond British India's reaches. It devised strategies of influence-building that operated at the local and informal level and which used native intermediaries, especially ethnic and religious minorities. Thus, despite not being formally colonised or indirectly ruled through a permanent British representative, as most of the Indian princely states were, I have shown that the government of India succeeded in creating alternative colonial inroads into Afghanistan, which in the long-run impacted the development of the modern Afghan state at the turn of the twentieth century.

The British administrations established in Kabul and Kandahar during the Afghan war and the series of British-led boundary commissions showed that spaces for influence-building could be carved out also without direct and protracted control over a native polity. During the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar British authorities made a concrete attempt at transforming Afghanistan into another Indian princely state, while also employing direct forms of government in the two cities. They set up a British-led administration, which merged the annexationist trends of earlier Company expansion in India, as applied to Afghanistan from the 1870s, with an attempt to establish embryonic forms of the institutions characteristic of formal colonialism in India, such as policing, land revenue, administration of justice and knowledge collection. At the same time, they employed layered sovereignty and indirect rule to reach out beyond the directly controlled urban areas and establish British influence in Turkestan, Badakhshan, Herat and Ghazni. In this effort, British officials used local intermediaries – Sirdars, local provincial rulers and especially ethnic and religious minorities – as intelligence gatherers and proxy state-builders. Collaboration with what were considered privileged partners of the empire was picked up and expanded during the permanence of the Afghan Boundary Commission in Maimena between 1884-7. The complex set of understandings, policies and networks that shaped British India's experiments with governing and influencing Afghanistan

in these years showed that 1857 was not that sharp of a divide in the colonial history of nineteenth century India as historians have often argued. The government of India's expansionist tendency in these decades and the use empire-building strategies part of what by the late nineteenth century historians have seen as a by-gone age sharply questions the non-interventionist and modern character of the British colonial state in India.

In the late 1880s and 1890s, the British-led boundary commissions that defined Afghanistan's borders towards Central Asia became moments of increasing colonial interference in Afghan affairs. In fact, as chapter three has shown, boundary making allowed British officials to become key architects in Afghan state-building: the government of India delineated Afghanistan's place *vis-à-vis* the British empire and succeeded in extending its influence over this native polity. On occasion of the Maimena boundary commission, the government of India justified demands for greater interference through its jurisdiction over Afghanistan's 'foreign affairs', which was made into an expandable category that could accommodate different forms of British influence-building at different times. In Maimena the relations between British boundary commissioners and Afghan administrators often bypassed the government of India's official relations with the court of Kabul: they were able to influence local day-today decision-making on the local and provincial levels, often through the forging of informal collaborations. The processes of knowledge exchange that accompanied the government of India's relations with local Afghan administrators created the space for propelling colonial ideas into the Afghan state structures from the bottom up, as chapters three and five have shown. During the A.B.C., the cooperation between British boundary commissioners, local elites and Afghan administrators worked to delineate a model of state-building that became the blueprint for successive territorial annexations to the Afghan state. As seen in the chapter above, in the longer term this model was adopted by the government of Kabul, which started to use it independently in its internal state-building.

The forms of interference the government of India devised in these decades were informed by colonial ideas of Afghan sociology. Central to British understanding of Afghanistan's social and political landscape were ideas of genealogy, tribal governance, landed aristocracy, as well as ethnic and religious groups. However, more than the construction of colonial knowledge on Afghanistan

per se, which has been largely the focus of more recent historical studies on nineteenth century Afghanistan, this thesis has shown for the first time how these ideas were translated into the government of India's policies towards Afghanistan proper, rather than towards the North-West Frontier alone. It has also shown, as pointed out in the chapter above, how these ideas found their way into the Afghan political and social landscape and assumed a life of their own, partially detached of their colonial origin. Colonial considerations of Afghan society as fractured along ethnic, sectarian and dynastic lines informed the government of India's plan of breaking up the region into different polities, which, in the eyes of the British authorities, were to have a certain internal ethnic coherence. This led for example to the attempted establishment of a Durrani-centric state in southern Afghanistan, as chapter two has shown. Tribal leadership, or what British officials identified as such, was sought and implemented along the Indo-British frontier – notably in the frontier districts annexed to British India during the first military campaign into Afghanistan – and in the provinces of Kabul and Kandahar. British authorities supported tribal chiefs as leaders of their community, as in the case of the Jamshidis, or as administrators of Afghan districts or provinces, as in the cases of Sirdar Shere Ali Khan and Wali Muhammad Khan. In these roles, these figures were given significant military and financial support from the government of India. Colonial knowledge also led the government of India to identify certain ethnic and religious groups as privileged partners in their attempt at building empire in Afghanistan. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the colonial state could rely on the connections forged with Afghanistan's ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Hazaras, Kizilbash, Jamshidis and Kafirs. Indeed, the chapters in this thesis have shown that the government of India continuously pushed for closer relations with these communities and used them to maintain an open door to the Afghan polity: as privileged partners they could be employed to facilitate another British invasion and help establishing more visible forms of British rule over Afghanistan.

Anglo-Afghan encounters between 1869 and 1900 showed that the late nineteenth century colonial state in India was able to devise different methods of empire building, which continuously interrogated the position of Afghanistan *vis-à-vis* the British empire. The territorial expansion of Afghanistan, its systematisation into a definite geographical entity and the restructuring of the institutions of the state the

amir undertook between 1881 and 1900 can no longer be considered processes that originated from the Afghan ruling class itself. This thesis has shown that the policies adopted by the government of Kabul in the 1880-90s were significantly influenced by the government of India, thus questioning Afghanistan's status as a non-colonised country, immune from British colonial dynamics. Rather, colonial influence in Afghanistan took different forms as the government of India was able to carve out different inroads into this polity, which interrogate British India's relations with an emerging Afghan state as either colonial or imperial. In fact, the traditional classifications of territories subsumed to different degrees of imperial control did not reflect the multifaceted and ambiguous forms British India's influence assumed in Afghanistan. At times, Afghanistan became a princely state, at others a protectorate or a buffer state or, again, a polity within the British sphere of influence. All the time, the colonial state guaranteed the polity's 'independence', while continuously pushing for more interference, or even territorial annexation. Thus, the government of India's approach towards Afghanistan in these years straddled these different categories and assumed different and often contradictory forms at different times. British officials maintained complex understandings of Afghanistan's position *vis-à-vis* the British empire. They did not think about Afghanistan in compartmentalised boxes but used these terms interchangeably and often imprecisely, without perceiving it contradictory to do so. However, if we try to disentangle these different terms and meanings we see layered and blurred forms of colonial interference, which comfortably used quasi-sovereignty as a tool to engineer greater and deeper influence over Afghanistan. From the 1870s to the end of the nineteenth century, British officials took the Indian princely states as a model for framing Afghan dependency from the imperial power but they went beyond it, taking inspiration from other forms of indirect rule across the empire.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, imperial expansion across the globe was propelled by the increased competition among the major European imperial powers for new colonies in the African continent, in what is commonly known as the 'scramble for Africa'.[827] Territorial expansion went hand in hand with experiments in governing new native territories and polities across the globe, from Africa and the

[827] Porter, *The Lion's Share*, 2004; Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble For Africa* (London: Abacus, 1992).

Middle East to the subcontinent and the Pacific. Many of the British military and political officers who took part in the occupation of Kabul and Kandahar between 1879 and 1881 made their appearances in other imperial settings: Crimea war (1855-6), Indian Mutiny (1857), China (1860), Abyssinia (1867-8), New Zealand (1873-4), Sudan (1884-5), Burma (1885), South Africa (1899-1900) and a number of expeditions along British India's North-West Frontier. These were often areas of colonial expansion or attempted expansion, in which officials on the ground experimented with practices of both direct and indirect rule with large degrees of autonomy, often revising and modifying directives coming from the imperial centres.[828] Through their experiences in different parts of the empire, colonial officials created a body of knowledge about how to govern native territories, which entailed notions of colonial sociology, the use of local intermediaries, strategies of tax collection, policing and law enforcement.[829] The 'mobile' careers of these administrators also triggered processes of knowledge circulations between officials in different parts of the empire, who shared their 'expertise' across regions. At the same time, officials drew on their previous experience when formulating policies and strategies of governance. Strategies of governance and ideas on native sociology travelled hand-in-hand with the imperial careers of these administrators who employed, adapted and modified them in their everyday interaction with local intermediaries and institutions – nobles, bureaucrats, soldiers, minorities – across the empire. Benjamin Hopkins has shown that principles of frontier governance developed along British India's North-West Frontier around the mid-1870s were subsequently adopted in other imperial frontier settings, such as Baluchistan, India's north-east, Kenya, North America, through the transposition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR).[830] For him, Afghanistan acted as a sort of ground zero for the experimentation with governance strategies for tribal societies. Thomas Metcalf has similarly argued that British India functioned as a legal blueprint for the rest of the empire in that Indian legal codes were an important inspiration for colonial governance in the African continent.[831]

[828] Wilson, 'The Making of a Colonial Order'.
[829] Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*, New African Histories (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014).
[830] Hopkins, 'The Frontier Crimes Regulation and Frontier Governmentality'.
[831] Metcalf, *Imperial Connections*.

However, the imperial connections forged by the group of administrators who took part in the second Afghan war displayed a much more complex model of imperial exchanges and mutual influence, which cannot be reduced to the transposition of British India's jurisprudence to the rest of the empire. Indeed, for these officials Afghanistan was often only one step in highly mobile careers, both in the subcontinent as in other parts of the empire. Thus, the strategies high ranking officials as well as second and third-tier administrators formulated cannot be reduced to a fixed model in which experiences formulated in the subcontinent radiated outwards to the rest of the empire. As chapter four has shown, when thinking about Afghanistan's legal status within the empire, British administrators drew parallels with cases that for them had elements of comparison to the Afghan one. Historians have not yet detangled this complex web of imperial careers, knowledge production and exchanges. We still don't know enough about how practices of indirect rule evolved in different geographical spaces and intersected over time. Hopkins has pointed out that practices developed on the Afghan 'fringe' were important building blocks for governance strategies later adopted in the imperial 'centres'. This research has started to show that practices of indirect rule cannot be studied in isolation, as they often amounted to a set of entangled practices, whose precise point of origin is difficult to pinpoint.

In the nineteenth century Afghanistan was at the centre of imperial connections that linked it to other regions of the empire through the lives and careers of those British officials that formulated the government of India's policy towards this polity. At the same time, Afghanistan was also still part of regional flows of people and knowledge. Historians have pointed out that with the rise of the East India Company in the subcontinent the commercial routes that linked India, Afghanistan and Central Asia had experienced a set-back.[832] However, this thesis has showed that in the second half of the nineteenth century Afghan state-building was closely linked with the colonial presence in India. Chapter four and this section have shown that the government of Kabul's state-building that followed the annexation of the new demarcated borderlands employed a group of military and political officers as governors and administrators of the new Afghan provinces. Figures such as Kazi Sad-ud-din, general Ghaus-ud-din Khan and general Abdul Kuddus Khan became

[832] Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*; Hanifi, *Connecting Histories in Afghanistan*.

veritable itinerant state-builders: by the later 1890s the government of Kabul had formed these officials into a team of experts in state-building and frontier settlement. These figures made their appearances in the British-led boundary commissions in Maimena and Turkestan; they were employed by the government of Kabul in the aftermath of the demarcations in settling local land revenue relations and in reforming the administration.

These mobile native administrators entertained close links to British imperial institutions and further complicate the narrative of the intersections between Afghan state-building and British colonial interference. Preliminary findings on these personalities have shown that in many cases, when appointed by the government of Kabul, they had gained previous experience as bureaucrats and intermediaries in the imperial institutions of the subcontinent. As pointed out in chapter three, Kazi Sad-ud-din had worked as *kazi* for the British authorities during the occupation of Kandahar. In addition, these figures had often been involved in the British-led boundary commissions directly. General Abdul Kuddus Khan had been the architect of Abdur Rahman's annexation of Herat and was later employed as commanding general in the Hazarajat war, as the chapter above has shown.[833] At a first glance, Afghan itinerant state-builders exemplified alternative networks connecting British India and Afghanistan, which were not directly entangled in commerce or military service. However, further research is required on the hybrid careers of these Afghan officials. They eluded any commonplace image of native partners of the British empire in India, such as the munshis, soldiers, landed gentry, which have been widely portrayed in historical writing. These itinerant state-builders became key figures in building the modern Afghan state, while also being intimately connected with the imperial power and its officials. In the settlement of the newly annexed provinces of Maimena and Turkestan, they acted as bridgeheads in the translation of colonial ideas of state-building and Afghan sociology into the structures of the local administration. As seen in chapter four, they cooperated with the British boundary commissioners in the resettlement of the Jamshidis and were later in charge of the Pashtun colons who arrived in Maimena from southern Afghanistan. In a way, Afghan itinerant state-builders became themselves agents of the British empire, willingly or unwillingly facilitating British attempts at exercising closer influence over Afghanistan. Thus, in

[833] Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863-1901*, 61.

many ways they straddled the imperial and the native dimensions, questioning once again the usefulness of strict categories for understanding Afghanistan's colonial history.

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