

Durand line between Afghanistan and Pakistan; Historical facts

Social Sciences and Humanities

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Abstract

At the time of creation of Pakistan, the Afghan Government put a demand of Pakhtoonistan designed by Afghanistan to include the tribal territory, north-west frontier province of Pakistan and a part of the Balochistan province in Pakistan. These areas have always been regarded vital for the security of the sub-continent, on the north and west by the Durand line drawn in 1893 after the second Afghan war. Afghanistan began to lay claims to the frontier areas challenging the validity of the Durand line as a result the relations have remained far from friendly and remained tense most of the time.

Keywords: Pashtunistan issue, Durand line, British empire

Introduction

In July 1947, on the eve of the establishment of Pakistan a referendum was held in the North-West Frontier Province that people have not been given an opportunity, free from any kind of influence, to determine for themselves whether they wish to be independent or to become a part of Pakistan. The Afghan representative Hosyan Aziz told the general assembly, "that we do not recognize the north-west frontier province as a part of Pakistan" (Foreign Affairs reports, Delhi, July 1955, P.83)

After the creation of Pakistan, the Afghan Government started violent propaganda against Pakistan in the press and on the radio, and also voted against Pakistan, admission to the united. The boundaries of the Afghanistan were drawn and diverse ethnic group were brought under his direct control. Dost Muhammad and Sher Ali reunified the country.

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In early 19th century two major factors impeded the process of transforming the tribal society into a territorial state one was its heterogeneous population and other one was the intrusion by the imperialist powers to discuss the rule of British and Russian involvement in Afghanistan. Afghanistan border with British India made it important for the defense of the sub-continent, Russia aspired for access to warm water ports in the south in Indian Ocean. However, Russia's drive to the east which began in the early 18th century was intensified after the British had consolidated its hold in the sub-continent with the collapse of the Moghal Empire the East India Company assumed political power. Consequently, increasing commercial competition with other foreign traders. In the meantime, Russia in Asia had emerged as a potential rival of Britain in the region to counter Russian activities in Afghanistan; Britishers provided aid to ruler of Persia to fight the Russian and sent its envoy to Peshawar to talk with ruler of Kabul known as Shah Shuja. They reached on an agreement of mutual defense.

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 which effected Persia tribal wars in Afghanistan and the family feuds of the Durani princes after the death of Ahmed Shah most of the areas of Afghanistan were lost and in 1826. Amir Dost Mohammad was confined to Kabul and Ghazni only inspite of all his efforts he could not succeed to regain Peshawar and northwest frontier from Ranjit Singh. Finally, the loss of Peshawar by the Afghan ruler was confirmed by the tripartite treaty of friendship concluded in 1838 between Ranjit Singh, Shah Shuja and the Governor General of British India, and the Sikhs assured their help to Shah Shuja in regaining Kabul and Kandahar from Dost Mohammad in return for his recognition of the Sikh control over the Punjab and NWFP and after restoring Shah Shuja in 1839. The British forces was pledged, remained in Kabul to strengthen the position of Shah Shuja. After defeat Dost Mohammad had left the country, because his presence provoked tribal revolts in Kabul and Kandahar which led to retreat of British forces. The major factors responsible for the British retreat were the Afghan resentment to the occupation of their territory by foreign forces which caused the first Anglo Afghan war (1839-1842). The British forces withdrew from Afghanistan after four years (L. Dupree, Afghanistan, Princeton, 1973, P.339)

Dost Mohammad returned to power in 1843. His efforts to recover Peshawar from the Sikhs and from its independent ruler Dost Mohammad and British India entered into a treaty of peace and friendship in 1855 at Peshawar, which imposed an obligation on the Afghan ruler to be friendly with Britain's friends. The treaty was also followed by another supplementary agreement during the British Persian war over Herat to counter the Persian influence.

To counter the Russians, Britishers pursued its forward policy, and occupied Quetta in 1876 and converted it into a military base, and called upon Sher Ali to accept a European staffed mission in Kabul, because Sher Ali, successor of Dost Mohammad had entered into a defence treaty with Russia after having failed to secure a British guarantee against the danger from the north. The Anglo-Afghan relation which were strained by this move received another jolt when a Russian mission arrived in Kabul. The British government immediately reiterated its demand for a European mission in Kabul regarding which the Amir was in no mood to make concessions. Finally Amir reply pushed the British forces marched into his territory and the second Anglo-Afghan war was began (1878-80).

Treaty of Gandamak on 26 May 1879

Yakub Khan, who had become Amir during his father Sher Ali absence signed the treaty of Gandamak with British India to halt its advance Amir accepted the latter's suzerainty over his country's foreign relations and agreed to the appointment of an English born resident in Kabul in return he was assured of British support against foreign aggression and payment of an annual grant. On the principle of give and take, the treaty stipulated the Amir's reoccupation of certain areas and cession of other parts to the British. The British restored to the Amir Kandahar, Jalalabad and other areas under its possession in return for the letter's concurrence to code the districts of Kurram Pashin and Sibi to the British administrative control. However, the Amir did not abandon his claim over the above districts as the article envisaged that the said districts shall not be considered as permanently served from the limits of the Afghan kingdom.

Meanwhile the occurrence of two events namely the return of Abdur Rehman to Afghanistan and the defeat of the tory party in Britain determined the subsequent covers of the Afghan history. Abdur Rehman nephew of the late Amir Sher Ali, who had spent 12 years in exile in Samarkand and Tashkant with Russia good will, proclaimed him self Amir on July 20,1880 under the modified policy of the liberal party the British forces withdraw from Afghanistan in 1881. Abdur Rehman pursued forcefully the task of internal consolidation and unification of the country's diverse elements. According to the correspondence with the British officer, his approval of the term of the treaty of Gandamak.

In 1885 Russia occupied the Panjdeh oasis, but for the strong British ultimatum indicating the possibility of a war, following negotiation between the two power, Afghanistan's northern borders were fixed by 1886 on the basis of the 1873 boundary along the Amu Darya in the northeast, Russia

secured the land north of the Amu Darya and Afghanistan got all the land south of the Amu beside the control of the Wakhan, and frontier with British India, the Durand line was accepted as the border between Afghanistan and British government in 1893 in 1907 convention British and Russia was recognized the Afghanistan as a buffer state between them but the British, however did not relinquish control of Afghan foreign affairs until 1919. The issue ultimately led to the third Anglo Afghan war in May 1919 what probably encourage King Amanullah to launch the war against the British. The result of their peace negotiations was the treaty of Rawalpindi in 1919, heralding the end of British suzerainty over Afghanistan, in commemoration of which Afghanistan hold Jashn every year in the month of August. The treaty however said that Afghanistan should be officially free and independent in its internal and external affairs. W.K Fraser tytler, Afghanistan, London, 1953, PP 197-98

Afghan Government Claim

The Afghan government began to lay claims in the mid 1940 to the NWFP and tribal areas lying beyond the Afghan side of Durand line hoping to recover what is considered the “lost Afghan areas” from the British following the creation of Pakistan Kabul diverted its, campaign towards this new state, initially expressing concern for the Pukhtoos rights since the partition, the issue has been so consistently raised by the successive Afghan regimes. Dawood during his last days of his government tried to come to a settlement with the Bhutto regime.

Validity of Afghan’s Claim

After having defeated the Marhatta and the Sikhs Ahmad Shah extended his control to Persian Khorasan in the North West and the Punjab as far as Delhi in the south east. Although he had occupied Peshawar, Punjab, Kashmir, Balochistan eastern provinces and Sindh, but after his death vast empires disintegrated except Peshawar, the Afghan rulers had acquiesced in the loss of other areas. This is borne out by the fact that the British India, after its occupation of the frontier in 1849, had to carry out 37 expediting across the frontier in a period of 30 years for border facilitation, but Shah Shuja King of Afghanistan in 1838 renounced his claim to the NWFP and the Punjab under a tripartite treaty of alliance Balochistan was annexed to British India in 1859. Quetta was turned into a military base, and a result of second war with Afghanistan British India secured some more areas in the frontier Yakub Khan in the agreement of Gandamak agreement assented formally. (ibid. P .185)

Abdur Rehman continued to oppose the British forward policy, he was a strong and assertive ruler who could not have been so coerced, as has been alleged by some, as to concur to a boundary line determinate at to his interest. He was beset with continuous tribal dissension in the Pukhtoon areas but in 1893, when Mortimar Durand reached Kabul for border delination talks. The country was in a more than precarious state it had ever been The British suzerainty over Afghanistan had its own limitation as it could not prevent the Amir's forward move in the tribal areas. The British road and railway construction pointing towards Kandhar and Kabul was a matter of grave concern for the Amir. The Anglo-Afghan talks which began in September 1893 on the arrival of the Durand mission in Kabul concluded with the signing of an agreement on November 12, 1893, by defining the Eastern and Southern limits of the Afghan agreement delineated the boundary between British India and Afghanistan.

Each pledged not to interfere in other's territories as fixed there in. British India could have easily exploited their roslility to the Amir as it did against Amanullah the policy paid its dividend to the Afghan rulers as was born out by the latter events suffice is to mention here the instance, Amanullah call for Jihad against the "infidels" in May 1919 (third Anglo Afghan war) in 1901 the British separated the cis-island region of the Pukhtoons from the Punjab and formed a separate province of north west frontier. Dividing the province into settled districts and five tribal agencies of Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, North Waziristan and south Waziristan.

Treaty of 1919

The treaty which was signed on the 22nd November 1921 after nine months of protected parleys initially for 3 years without denouncing the treaty, Kabul asked for its renegotiation in the wake of partition. As a matter of fact, the then prevailing situation in the region had impressed upon both parties.

(Nicholas Manergh, The transfer of power, 1942-7, Document, vol xi, London 1982)

In the treaty of 1921 unequivocally stated that both "mutually accept the Indo Afghan frontier" as well a "the boundary west of the Khyber laid down by the British Commission" However, the first world war weakened the British hold over its overseas territories. Anticipating the British transfer of powers to the Indians. Afghanistan began to assert its interest in the territory east of the Durand line. In a letter to the government of British India in 1944, it indicated its interest in fate of the Pukhtoons on the Indian side of the border contending that the Durand line was an international boundary, the British government reject the Afghan plan. Kabul's reiteration of the matter in

November 1946 also received the British rebuff. The 3rd June scheme and the partition agreement of 1947 providing the Pukhtoon with the choice to opt for India or Pakistan evoked strong protest from Afghanistan as “originally a part of Afghanistan” taken away by British Kabul, in a Note dated 13 June 1947, opposed the proposed referendum on the ground that it did not included the choice for Pukhtoon’s independence or for their “rejoining” the “mother land” Afghanistan .

In 1950 the Afghan parliament declared its support for “Puktoonistan” and repudiated all past Anglo-Afghan agreements. Moving a step further, Kabul sponsored a “Pukhtoonistan government at Tirah in the border region under the headship of Faqir of IP “Haji Mirza Ali Khan known as Faqir of IPI, known of his anti British activities. This naturally caused resentment in Pakistan, Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan denied Kabul radio report about freedom movement in frontier.

(See CAP Debates, 9 January 1950 (constitution assembly Pakistan)

Conclusion

By taking this stand Kabul officially extended its support to Ghaffar Khan who opposed the referendum in response, the British government reiterated its position. Gaffar Khan agitation for Pukhtoon’s independence, the British warning presumably aimed at desisting Kabul from exploiting the situation. The resolution for a free Pathan state of all Pukhtoos adopted on June 21, 1947 by the frontier congress committee, Khudai Khitmatgar and the Zalmai Pukhtoos also did not reflect the slightest desire to join Afghanistan. After having rejected the result of referendum it refused to recognize the NWFP as a part of Pakistan and came out with the demand that the Pukhtoos be allowed to freely determine their future its first major unfriendly gesture at international level wasi its lone negative vote to Pakistan’s membership in the UN Kabul’s claim on the Durand line is not an international boundary, the Pukhtoon areas historically belong to Afghanistan and have never formed an integral part of India with the British departure from India, the Aglo-Afghan treaties were also extinct. Pakistan rejected the Afghan claim it contents that the Durand line is an international frontier.

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