UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Challenging Continuity: The policies of the East India Company and the Government of India towards Russia in the era of the Great Game, 1838-1880

being a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of

History

in the University of Hull

by

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July 2023

Acknowledgements

To my supervisors, Simon Smith and Charles Prior, who guided me through this process and helped me to improve my writing in countless ways over the last four years. Additionally, to David Omissi, who supervised me for the first year of my PhD and encouraged me to write this thesis in the first place. Finally, to my family, who supported me through all of the stress that went into writing this thesis and believed in me when I needed it.

Abstract

This thesis argues that the Indian Mutiny of 1857, which resulted in the East India Company's replacement as the Government of India by the direct rule of the British Government, represented a major turning point in the Great Game. It challenges the notion in the current historiography of the Great Game that the policies of these two governments regarding the Game were continuous. The thesis argues that the East India Company's strategy towards defending India from the threat of Russia during the Game was to expand, securing territory and aggressively pursuing the allegiance of neighbouring states in order to place as many 'buffer states' between Russia and India as possible, while the Government of India under direct British rule fortified only its most essential buffers, particularly Afghanistan, and allowed Russia to expand into Central Asia without interference, while also allowing its allies in the region to govern themselves rather than trying to control them directly. It argues that this approach was more successful than the approach of the East India Company as it enabled them to conserve their resources and avoid alienating potential allies, which reduced the Russian threat to India in the long term.

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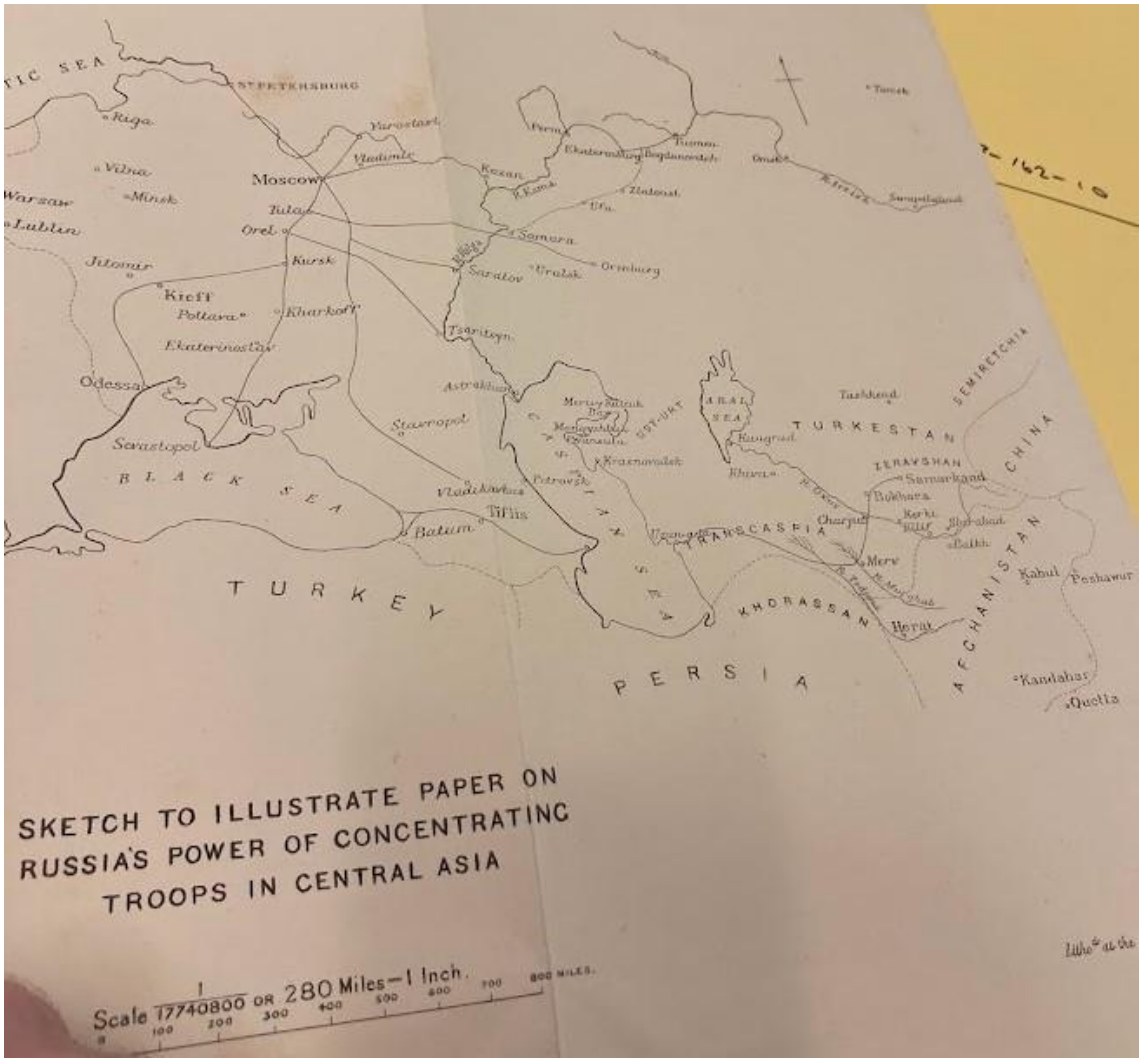

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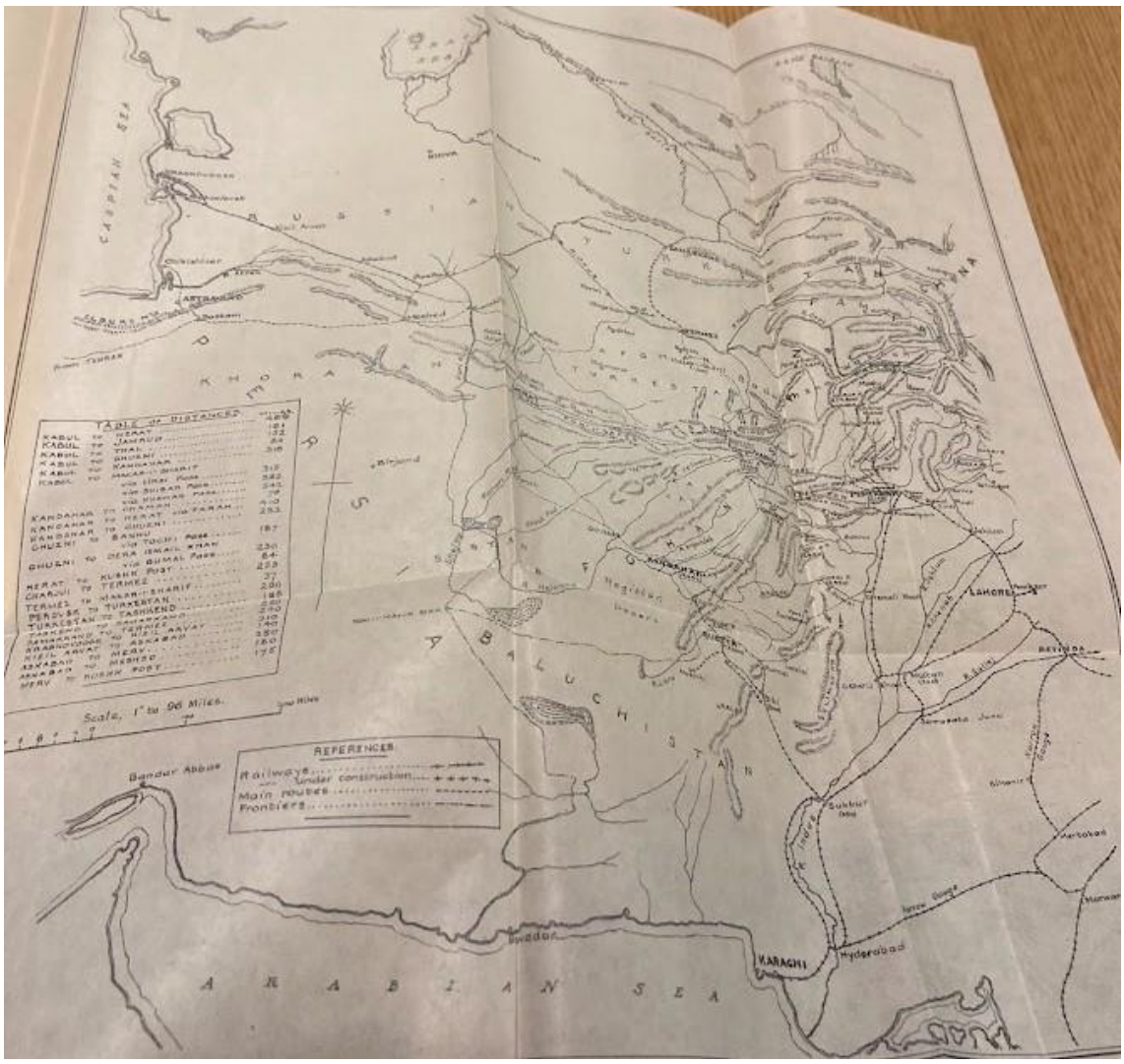

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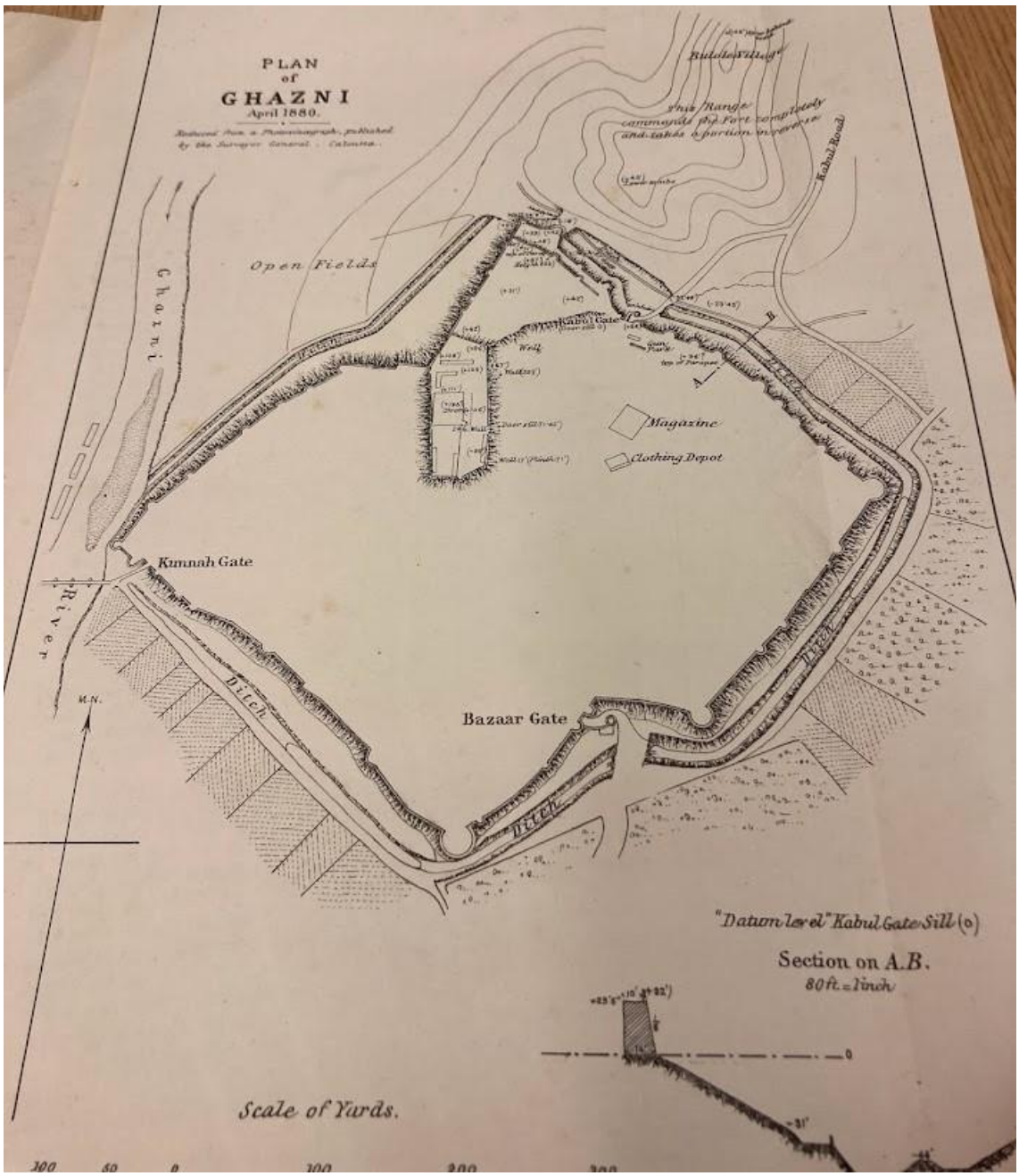

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Introduction

Throughout their time as the colonial rulers of India, the British Empire was engaged in an ongoing rivalry with Russia over imperial expansion in Asia. This conflict has become known as the Great Game and has become a source of great contention among historians, with many debates springing up about the extent and even the existence of the Game. However, these interpretations have consistently overlooked an important aspect of the Game, the change in government that India underwent in 1858, following the disastrous Indian Mutiny of 1857. The East India Company, which had been the British Government's proxy in India for centuries, was disbanded and replaced with direct British rule.

The East India Company was founded in 1600, originally as a trading company designed to help Britain trade in the Indian Ocean, and in particular India itself. However, in its multiple centuries of existence, it evolved, transitioning from a simple trading company into essentially a government in its own right. In the end the downfall of the East India Company came not from without, but from within following the infamous Indian Mutiny of 1857 which began as an army mutiny but developed into a general uprising against the British presence. The central purpose of this thesis is to compare the policies of the East India Company with those of the British Government's rule of India regarding the defence of India against Russia. An implication has emerged in the historiography that there was no real difference between the two, perhaps because the Company is believed to be simply an arm of the British Government with no autonomy.

After winning the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Company began to take control of land in India bit by bit, beginning in the Mughal Empire and expanding from there.[1] Despite still officially being a trading company, the Company acted exactly as a government would, making policies and laws, conducting diplomacy, and waging war.[2] The East India Company was, at least on paper, subservient to the British Government, in the form of the Board of Control, an agency set up by the Government to oversee the Company

The Board of Control (also known as the India Board), was made up of six Privy Council members, which must include the Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of the Secretaries of State, would have full access to all of the Company's papers, and would approve dispatches

[1] P. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2011), p. 4.
[2] Ibid*,* pp. 4-5.

sent to them by the Company, but would have no power over the appointment and dismissal of personnel.[3] In 1793, the limitation on the number of Board of Control members was removed.[4] In practice, however, the details of the actual administration of India was left to the Company itself, whose officials were more qualified to make such decisions due to having more experience in Indian affairs.[5] This was a necessity, as prior to the invention of the telegram, the process of sending orders from Britain to India took far too long for most decisions of Indian policy to be made that way.

The East India Company was run by a Court of Directors, based in London, who would appoint a Governor-General, who would be based in India and be advised by the Council of India. The Court of Directors possessed full autonomy over the appointment and dismissal of officials as well as all commercial matters, and still retained a high degree of autonomy in other matters.[6] The Court of Directors possessed the power of originating orders on all ordinary matters, though these were subject to revision by the Board.[7] While the Board did have the power to overrule the Court in most matters, any official up to and including the Governor-General, could be removed by the Court even if they were supported by the Board.[8] The East India Company's Secret Committee, also appointed by the Court of Directors was set up to transmit the wishes of the Court of Directors to the Board of Control and vice versa, without disclosing the contents of the documents to anyone else.[9] It was the Governor-General who would make most of the day-to-day decisions in India, as the highest ranking official actually based in India, though the Court of Directors could remove and replace the Governor-General at any time.[10] The Governor-General was also not authorised to declare war without the approval of either the Court of Directors or the Board of Control (but not necessarily both), unless an emergency such as an invasion by a hostile power, or preparations for such an invasion, required him to do so.[11] This meant that if the Governor-General could demonstrate that an invasion was

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[3] W. Foster, 'The India Board (1784-1858)', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 11 (1917)*, p. 63.
[4] Ibid, p. 71.
[5] Ibid, p. 64.
[6] Ibid, p. 65.
[7] P.J. Tuck (ed), *The East India Company, 1784-1834* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), p. 12.
[8] Foster, 'The India Board (1784-1858)', p. 66.
[9] P. Auber, *An Analysis of the Constitution of the East-India Company, and of the Laws Passed by Parliament for the Government of Their Affairs, at Home and Abroad*, (London: Kingsbury, Parbury and Allen, 1826), p. 81.
[10] S. David, *Victoria's Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 78.
[11] Auber, *An Analysis of the Constitution of the East-India Company, and of the Laws Passed by Parliament for the Government of Their Affairs, at Home and Abroad*, p. 99.

necessary and that there was no time to wait for approval, he would be able to declare war on his own prerogative.

The Court of Directors were not appointed by the British Government, being selected internally within the Company, and consisting of twenty-four members.[12] Control over the affairs of the East India Company was then officially split between the Court of Directors and the Board of Control, though in practice, the Governor General was usually responsible for the day-to-day management of India. In 1852 an attempt was made in Parliament primarily by Lord Ellenborough, the former Governor-General who had been dismissed by the Court of Directors, to abolish the Court and have the Board take full control over the governance of India, but this was denied on the grounds that there would then be no effective check on despotism by Parliament, with the only result being that membership of the Court of Directors was reduced from twenty-four members to eighteen.[13]

This method of using semi-independent organisations to control territory was not unique to the East India Company. The British Empire also employed the Brooke family, the so-called 'White Rajahs' to rule the Raj of Sarawak, in north-west Borneo from 1841 to 1946.[14] Separately, the North Borneo Company was also set up in 1881 in the same manner as the East India Company, and actually had to negotiate for territory with the Brooke family.[15] Both became protectorates of the British Government in 1888 and administration of Borneo was fully taken over by the British Government in 1946.[16] Even after becoming British protectorates, the Raj of Sarawak and the North Borneo Company continued to be separate entities and to negotiate for contested territories.[17] Additionally, the Royal Niger Company ran Nigeria from 1879 to 1900.[18] Another example would be the British South Africa Company, established in 1889 with a charter based on that of the East India Company.[19]

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[12] Tuck (ed), *The East India Company, 1784-1834*, p. 2
[13] Foster, 'The India Board (1784-1858)', p. 83.
[14] A. Kaur, 'The Babbling Brookes: Economic Change in Sarawak 1841–1946'. *Modern Asian Studies*, 29, 1 (1995) p. 68.
[15] D.K. Fieldhouse, *Select Documents on the Constitutional History of the British Empire and Commonwealth: 'The Empire of the Bretaignes'* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) p. 555.
[16] Memorandum from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Policy in regard to Malaya and Borneo (1945) The National Archives, CAB/129/1, p. 87.
[17] S. Runciman, *The White Rajah: A History of Sarawak from 1841 to 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 197.
[18] G. Baker, *Trade Winds on the Niger: Saga of the Royal Niger Company, 1830-1971* (Oxford: Radcliffe Press, 1996)
[19] J. S. Galbraith, *Crown, and Charter: The early Years of the British South Africa Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) pp. 88-90.

The East India Company was, however, by far the most expansive and most important of these semi-independent imperial powers. The army of the East India Company was mostly made up of Indian soldiers divided into three armies, based in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Originally, the Company only had a few hundred soldiers as guards, but after 1750 it expanded to 3 000. Each time the Company conquered a new region of India, that regions soldiers would be assimilated into the Company's army. By 1824, the Company's army had expanded to 200 000.[20] By 1833, as one East India Company employee, Thomas Babington Macaulay, who served as the Secretary at War between 1839 and 1841, and as the Paymaster-General between 1846 and 1848 would point out, the East India Company was in charge of both a larger civilian population and a larger army than that directly under the control of the British Government.[21] In 1844 the combined average strength of the three armies was 235 446 native and 14 584 European.[22]

At that time, India was thought of as Britain's most important overseas territory, because of its importance in trade and the large army that was stationed there. John Darwin argues that India is what made Britain into a military power rather than just a naval power, as the bulk of its land forces were stationed there.[23] As such its protection became of paramount importance. By 1839, the East India Company had already gained control of almost all Indian territory, with only the Punjab region remaining out of its hands. However, they were not the only imperial power building an empire in Asia. Fears of Russian invasion of India had been on the rise since the Napoleonic Wars. In 1838, there were many other independent states between the Russian Empire and India, but none of these were powerful enough militarily to withstand a Russian invasion if Russia did decide to march towards India. In reality, a direct Russian invasion of India was incredibly unlikely, as according to a report to the Council of India complied by Owen Tudor Burne, official secretary to two Viceroys of India, Lord Mayo and Lord Lytton, the Russians did not consider the risks of doing so to be worth the attempt, and openly admitted such.[24]

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[20] S. Wolpert, *A New History of India* (8th ed.) (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2009), p. 223.
[21] Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, p. 4.
[22] W. H. Sykes, 'Vital Statistics of the East India Company's Armies in India, European and Native,' *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 10, 2 (1847) pp. 100–131.
[23] J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 35.
[24] Memorandum by O.T. Burne on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India (1870 – 1879), The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 182.

They did, however, desire to do exactly the same thing that the East India Company had been doing, expand their influence in Central Asia and become the most dominant imperial power in the region. This gave rise to what has come to be known as the Great Game, in which both Empires attempted to increase their influence in the remaining independent countries in the region, without confronting each other directly. Furthermore, though some of the officials of the East India Company and Government of India believed that the Russians would not invade, many of them genuinely believed that an invasion could come, such as Governor-General Ellenborough.[25] Additionally, others such as Council of India member Henry Rawlinson believed that even if Russia did not invade, the expansion of Russian territory would incite either a mutiny of Indian soldiers or an invasion of India by the Afghans or the Persians in support of Russia.[26] As a result, control of the nations directly bordering India, known as 'buffer states' such as Afghanistan and Persia, became of paramount importance to the Company.

In the end the downfall of the East India Company came not from without, but from within. In 1857, the Bengal army, making up roughly one-third of the Company's Indian soldiers, dissatisfied with their treatment, turned against them. Though the causes of the Mutiny were many, the final straw was the rumour that the new bullet cartridges provided for the army by the East India Company were greased by pig and cow fat, forcing Hindus and Muslims to break their religious codes by biting them, as was necessary for the weapons to be loaded. It is true that rumours were spread throughout the army at the time that the cartridges were being greased in this way, but it was never actually proven that they were. However, most people at the time believed the rumours, even those who opposed the Mutiny. The military authorities investigated and found that no precautions had been taken to ensure the absence of fat but did not discover whether the fat was actually present or not.[27] Whether the rumours were true or not, focusing on this as the main factor allowed contemporary, empire-supporting historians to paint the Mutiny as a 'Muslim Conspiracy'.[28]

However, modern historians such as Saul David in *The Indian Mutiny* suggested that the greased cartridges were just one of many issues that caused the Mutiny, which also included the East India Company's recruitment policy, which prioritised people from some parts of India

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[25] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, p. 93.
[26] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[27] David, *Victoria's Wars,* pp. 292-293.
[28] B. Pati, 'The Great Rebellion of 1857: A Historiography', *Contemporary Perspectives, Volume 1* (London: Routledge, 2007)

over others and created resentment, the low payment and poor equipment provided by the East India Company, the cost of food, and the fact that British officers received preferential treatment in terms of promotions over Indian officers.[29] Gregory Fremont-Barnes, in *The Indian Mutiny 1857–58,* argues that although the revolt supposedly began because of the defence of religion, once it began there was very little in terms of a unifying cause or ideology for the rebels. [30] He also notes that discontent was rising among the soldiers before the greased cartridges ever became an issue, citing the removal of pensions for Indian soldiers as a major issue, along with the fact that the Bengal army was paid less than the Madras and Bombay armies, though he does still cite British attempts to interfere in Indian culture and fears that they would Christianize the country as major problems.[31] The one thing that unifies all of these possible causes is that they are all the result of the East India Company's mismanagement of not only their Indian soldiers, but also the Indian civilians. For example, Robert Campbell, a Liberal MP for Weymouth who blamed Muslim religious dissatisfaction for the Mutiny, also suggested several other potential causes. He claimed that the political power in India had become too centralized around the Governor General, and that the interference of his Secretaries had lowered the status of the officers in the eyes of the troops. He also stated that the abolition of corporal punishment for Indian troops, and then the partial return to it, was seen as a sign of weakness and indecision, and that the officers were aiming too much for political or civil office, neglecting their military duties.[32]

Kim Wagner argued that the Mutiny of 1857 was traumatising to the imperial psyche, and haunted them until the end of colonial rule in India.[33] Wagner argues that the trauma of the Mutiny for the British came from their belief that it was a planned conspiracy by religious fanatics, and that the colonial powers had become increasingly paranoid about conspiracies during this time period due to events such as the French Revolution.[34] She argues that the Mutiny came to be seen by the British as a struggle between civilisation and barbarism, and was the most momentous moment of the British colonization of India in regards to its effect on the colonial psyche.[35] Queen Victoria herself referenced the conspiracy theory in her proclamation of 1858, saying that 'we deeply lament the evils and misery which have been

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[29] S. David, *The Indian Mutiny: 1857* (New York: Viking, 2002), pp. 34-45.
[30] G. Fremont-Barnes, *The Indian Mutiny 1857–58* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p. 78.
[31] Ibid*,* p. 24.
[32] R.J.R. Campbell, *The Indian Mutiny: Its Causes and Its Remedies. A Letter to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Palmerston* (London: Charles Evans, 'United Service Gazette Office,' 1857), pp. 5-6.
[33] K.A. Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies, and the Making of the Indian Uprising,* (Laussane: Peter Lang, 2010), p. xxiv.
[34] Ibid, p.p. 5-6.
[35] Ibid, p. xv.

brought upon India by the acts of ambitious men, who have deceived their Countrymen by false reports, and led them into open rebellion.'[36] She goes on to say that all but those who had murdered British subjects would be granted pardons in the interests of ending the bloodshed.[37]

The Mutiny was eventually put down, but the extreme bloodiness of the conflict, combined with the embarrassment that the British Government suffered as a result, caused them to remove the East India Company from its position, and oversee the rule of India directly instead. This new governmental rule of India was run by the Secretary of State for India, a new position created for the purpose, who would be the head of the newly created India Office, the replacement for the Board of Control.[38] He would be advised by the Council of India, but this Council would be based in Britain, not India as it had previously been, and consist of up to fifteen members.[39] The Council of India were advisors only, however, and the Secretary of State could overrule them, basing his authority on Parliament.[40] This Secretary of State would appoint a Viceroy to be sent to India as the Government's representative, but the Viceroys were granted less autonomy than the Governor-generals had enjoyed. The Viceroy retained his own Council, but this would consist of only six members, each of whom was required to have ten years of experience in India, which essentially served as his Cabinet, overseeing revenue, the military, law, finance, home and public works.[41] From 1870 onwards, officials in Britain were able to send telegraphs to the Viceroy in India, as a submarine cable was connected between the two countries in that year.[42] making it much easier for them to take a direct hand in the governance of India. The Viceroy did, however, remain the highest ranking official actually in India, and therefore still played a significant role in policymaking. The appointment of new Viceroys could bring with them major changes in policy, such as Lord Lytton's appointment in 1877 which led to a tougher stance against Russia and Afghanistan than was typical of the Government of India after the 1857 Mutiny.[43]

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[36] Proclamation, by the Queen in Council, to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (published by the Governor General at Allahabad, November 1st, 1858), p. 2.
[37] Ibid
[38] D. Judd, *The Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj, 1600-1947* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2005), pp. 87-88.
[39] Ibid, 88.
[40] Ibid.
[41] A.P. Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880–1910* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1986), p. 126.
[42] G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1952), p. 96.
[43] J. Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), p. 29.

With the change in government also came a change in policy. The structure of the Indian army was entirely revamped, and the new government was very aware of the failures of the East India Company that had led to the Mutiny in the first place. The reduction in power of the Viceroy in comparison to the Governor-General could be a response to the criticism that power in India had become too centralised. In the army, the method of recruitment was changed to the 'martial race' policy, which prioritised recruits from regions of India that were perceived to be more warlike, but also more politically subservient.[44] It also banned the use of artillery by Indian soldiers, to be replaced by solely British units.[45] In this way the British hoped to prevent another Mutiny. Their attempts to do so went beyond simply altering the structure of the army, however. Following 1857 the Indian army became much more reluctant to engage in military conflict at all. Between 1839 and 1857, the Indian army participated in the First Afghan War, the annexation of Sind, the First and Second Sikh Wars, and intervened militarily in the Persian invasion of Herat, as well as playing a small role in the Crimean War. By contrast, between 1858 and 1880 the Indian Army only participated in minor skirmishes, with the exception of the Second Afghan War.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare the policies of the East India Company with those of the British Government's rule of India in regard to the defence of India against Russia. An implication has emerged in the historiography that there was no real difference between the two, perhaps because the Company is believed to be simply an arm of the British Government with no autonomy. Many of the most prominent books on the subject of the Great Game make only a passing mention of the Mutiny or of the transition of power to the British Government, and either treat Indian policy towards the game as continuous before and after 1857, suggest that the Game did not even begin until after 1857, or ended before it. This thesis will argue that the Governor Generals of the Company were indeed provided with significant authority to set their own policies and answered mainly to the Company's Court of Directors. The Court had the power to both appoint and, as they did in the case of Lord Ellenborough, recall a Governor General at any time. Ellenborough was recalled specifically because he was implementing policies contrary to the wishes of the directors.[46] Ellenborough had, upon accepting the position, specifically thanked the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel for helping him

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[44] O. Khalidi, *Khaki and the Ethnic Violence in India: Army, Police, and Paramilitary Forces During Communal Riots* (Guragon: Three Essays Collective, 2003), p. 5.
[45] P. Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (London: Johnathan Cape, Ltd, 1974), p. 319.
[46] Secret Minutes of the East India Company Court of Directors, 9 April 1844, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, p. 194.

to attain such a high position.[47] If the Directors were able to remove Ellenborough from his position so easily despite his having the support of the Government, how then can the Company have been simply an arm of the Government with no autonomy?

Furthermore, considering the vast distances between Britain and India and the even more vast Empire the British were overseeing, it would have been physically impossible for the Government to directly oversee everything going on in India or any other part of the Empire. At some point, it would become necessary for the people actually in the country in question to make the decision for themselves, whether they were members of the Government of India or the Company, as there would be no time to ask for orders from Britain. This thesis will point out occasions where this occurred as it reaches them. On one occasion in 1838 for example, the East India Company Court of Directors were required to approve an exchange of territory with the French Government.[48] In 1839, it was resolved that the Secret Committee was authorized to 'act as they may deem best for the Company's Interests in any negotiation between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Portugal for the transfer to the Company of Portuguese Settlements in India.' [49] This indicates that the Company were trusted to negotiate on their own behalf without input from the Government, even in negotiations that directly concerned the Government. A key difference which sums up the contrast in the ways that the Company and the Government of India were run was that, under the Company, the Council of India were a group of advisors to the Governor General who were based with him in India, but when the British Government took office, they created a new Council of India who were based in London and advised the Secretary of State for India. When the new Council was formed in 1858, Lord Palmerston, the recently resigned former Prime Minister, made sure that they would be subservient to the Secretary of State, and that the Secretary of State would be subservient to the Government, as while the Secretary of State had the power to declare war as the Court of Directors had once had, he did not have the power to order any amount of

[47] Ellenborough, Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period. Edited by Lord Colchester*, (London, R. Bentley and son, 1874), pp. 169-170.
[48] Political Minutes of the Political and Military Committee of the EIC Court of Directors (1836-1848), 23 September 1838, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/1/17, p. 215.
[49] Secret Minutes of the East India Company Court of Directors, 5 April 1839, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, p. 153.

expenditure in pursuit of that war without the consent of the Government, which the Council had not needed.[50]

Furthermore, merely the fact that this new Council was based in Britain, not India, is very telling of the new attitude towards how India should be governed. Finally, the most important evidence that there was a difference between the East India Company and the Government of India is simply that they acted differently, at least during the time period that this thesis covers. The thesis will argue that the Company was much more expansionist and aggressive in its moves against Russia than the Government of India, which was more cautious, favoured diplomacy, and saw war as a last resort. Furthermore, it will argue that the Great Game had already begun prior to the beginning of the First Afghan War in 1839 and was still ongoing at the time of the Second Afghan War from 1878-1880, and indeed that neither war would have happened if not for the Game. As it was the goal of both the East India Company and the Government of India to minimize the influence of Russia over Asia and thereby reduce the threat to India, whether by spreading their own influence, or by creating independent 'buffer states' to halt the spread of Russian influence, this is the standard that will be used to determine which of the two approaches was most successful.Primarily, the thesis will argue that before 1857, the East India Company were interested in spreading British influence in India in direct opposition to Russian influence, competing for territory and attempting to build up as much of a barrier of so-called 'buffer states' between India and Russia as possible. This can be seen in its agents' missions to Central Asian states such as Bukhara and Khiva, its annexation of Sind and the Punjab, its military intervention in wars between Persia and Herat, and of course the First Afghan War. After 1857, under direct rule from the British Government, India became more passive and diplomatic in its approach, becoming content to allow Russia to exert its influence over the majority of Central Asia, as long as Afghanistan remained as a buffer. From the time of the Mutiny until the beginning of the Second Afghan War, Russia's imperial borders advanced all the way across Central Asia until it reached Afghanistan. This is an aspect of this conflict which has gone largely unmentioned in the historiography, which largely treats the Great Game as a single continuous conflict between Britain and Russia, without considering the change in government that India underwent during this time and the change in policy that accompanied it.

[50] Note on despatch of the Government of India Foreign Department by E. Perry, 12 December 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 294.

The historiography of the Great Game itself will be covered in detail in the first chapter, but the study of the Great Game requires an understanding of the study of British imperialism in India and elsewhere that has come before. Phillip Stern wrote *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, in which he challenged the notion that the East India Company was ever just a trading company, arguing that even in its early years it had all of the characteristics of a government.[72] He interprets the Company as its own unique form of government, different from that of the British state.[73] He argues that the Company has been seen as being interested solely in trade, but in reality, had the authority to 'establish fortifications, make law, erect courts, issue punishment, coin money, conduct diplomacy, wage war, arrest English subjects, and plant colonies.'[74] Stern's work mostly covers the earlier years of the Company, rather than the years surrounding its dissolution as are covered in this thesis, but his work is still useful in that it demonstrates how the Company was a government in its own right.

John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's celebrated article, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', argues that the British Empire was created as much by informal control via trade and alliances as it was by the formal establishment of colonies.[75] They argue that in contrast to the previously agreed upon interpretation that the British Empire was not interested in expansion during the mid-Victorian period, the British actually merely expanded in a different way during this period, using trade deals and treaties.[76] They argue that in the late-Victorian period, which appeared to represent a renewed interest in imperialism by the British in reality only represented an increased need for formal empire due to increased foreign challenges to the Empire, rather than an actual change in British policy.[77] They argue that formal and informal empire were interconnected and that informal empire should not be considered a separate, non-political category of expansion.[78] Their interpretation is that throughout the entire Victorian era the British consistently attempted to extend informal control over other nations when possible but were willing to resort to formal annexation when necessary.[79] In *Africa and the Victorians: The official mind of Imperialism,* they and Alice Denny also develop the concept

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[72] Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, p. viii.
[73] Ibid, p. 6.
[74] Ibid, p. 12.
[75] J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' *The Economic History Review, Vol. 6, No. 1* (1953), p. 1.
[76] Ibid, p 11.
[77] Ibid, p. 12.
[78] Ibid, p. 7.
[79] Ibid, pp. 12-13.

of the 'official mind' of colonialism, which they describe as a flow of deliberation, argument, calculation and mediation between differing impulses, but that required reading of the long-run national interest of Britain, which they argue remained largely the same regardless of which party was in power.[80] They argue that this 'official mind' could in itself become a cause of imperial expansion, as the prejudices and preconceptions of the ministers, who mostly came from similar upper class backgrounds, influenced their decision making.[81]

Alexander Morrison argued that the British parliament had very little control of the governance of India and that both British and Russian officials in Asia often acted without any real legislative oversight.[82] He argues that these officials, British and Russian, shared a common military-bureaucratic institutional culture which created an arrogance and sense of entitlement, based on their status as agents of self-proclaimed 'Great Powers'.[83] It was these attitudes, Morrison argued, that resulted in failures of intelligence and lack of understanding of Asian states that led to serious military failures by Russia in Khiva and the East India Company in Afghanistan.[84] Morrison adapts the concept of the 'official mind' developed by Robinson and Gallagher, stating that the 'official mind' should not be thought of as a unified rational actor but rather as multiple different identities and personalities that vary wildly, react erratically and do not have complete access to important information.[85]

In 'The Turbulent Frontier as a Factor in British Expansion', John Galbraith writes that although there was no significant desire in Britain for the expansion of the empire in India, the empire continued to expand nonetheless.[86] He contends that this was the result of a difference of opinion between the authorities in Britain, who believed that commerce in the region required peace, and the authorities in India, who believed that commerce in British India would not be secure as long as hostile military powers existed on its borders.[87] He argues that because of the vast distance between Britain and India, rapid communication between the two was very difficult and therefore the Governor-Generals of the East India Company were required to

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[80] J. Gallagher, R. Robinson and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The official mind of Imperialism*, (New York: Macmillan & Company, 1961), p. 19.
[81] Ibid, p. 22.
[82] A. Morrison, 'Twin Imperial Disasters. The invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British official mind, 1839–1842', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 48 , No. 1, (2014), p. 254.

[83] Ibid, p.p. 254-255.
[84] Ibid, p. 255.
[85] Ibid, p. 259.
[86] J. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 2, No. 2* (1960), p. 150.
[87] Ibid, pp. 152-153.

make decisions without consulting their superiors in Britain.[88] He argues that regardless of whether the authorities in Britain agreed with the expansions carried out by the East India Company, once the expansions were carried out, they were not reversed.[89] He uses the threat of Russia as an example of a problem that the empire faced in India that it did not face elsewhere, but does not elaborate further than that.[90]

Jon Wilson argued that imperial rule was not driven by a desire to change or 'civilise' India, but rather by the simple desire to maintain Britain's presence on Indian ground.[91] Wilson refers to the British justification for empire in India as self-justifying and circular, arguing that the British Empire in India was not a project or a system, but instead much more chaotic and ruled by individual self-interest.[92] For example, Wilson argues that the 1857 Mutiny was not caused by any British attempt to reform Indian society but rather by their desire to destroy all centres of authority in India other than their own, in order to hold on to power.[93] He argues that as a result of this, strong, consistent and effective power in India never existed, that in their anxiety to protect themselves, British officials often acted in ways that undermined their own interests.[94]

In *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, Waltroud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati questioned the extent to which the nominally independent Princely States were actually independent.[95] The princely states were parts of India that were not governed directly by the British but by an Indian ruler who answered to the British. Ernst and Pati note that in modern historiography it has been argued that some of the princely states has considerable autonomy in order to counteract older hegemonic accounts that depicted them as stooges of British imperial power, and restore their agency as active subjects.[96] However, they disagree with this interpretation, saying that the power of the princely states was in fact increasingly constrained by British colonial governance.[97] They make the interesting point that after 1857, the British implemented a policy of 'non-interference', which in reality meant influencing the Indian rulers politically and economically, through distributing honours, money, titles and territories to

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[88] Ibid, pp. 153-154.
[89] Ibid, pp. 155-156.
[90] Ibid.
[91] J. Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos of Empire*, (Public Affairs, 2016), p. 4.
[92] Ibid, p.p. 5-6.
[93] Ibid, p. 189.
[94] Ibid, p.p. 409-410.
[95] W. Ernst and B. Pati (eds), *India's Princely States: People, Princes and Colonialism*, (Milton Park: Taylor & Francis, 2007), p. 5.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

them, allowing them to believe themselves to be independent and autonomous when in reality they were not.[98] This policy of 'non-interference' is similar to the policy of 'masterly inactivity' employed by the British after 1858 in the Great Game, to influence the Central Asian states, as will be explored in Chapter Four of this thesis. The Queen expressed these sentiments together in her address at the end of the Mutiny, saying both that all previous treaties between the East India Company and the Princely states would be upheld by the new government, and that the British had no desire to further expand their borders.[99]

Much of the debate surrounding the Great Game seems to stem from an issue of the evolution of language. Those sceptical of the Game's existence will often point to the fact that the term 'Great Game' would not have been used by those who lived through it, and that its use as a term for espionage originated in a fictional novel. Furthermore, it is often assumed, as with Gerald Morgan, that the 'Great Game' was somehow separate from ordinary espionage, and that if the spy networks were not as expansive as depicted in *Kim*, then the 'Great Game' did not exist.[100] In these older texts, the term 'Great Game' is defined very narrowly, while later writers, such as Malcolm Yapp, would define the term more broadly.[101] Edward Ingram argued that the Game only lasted about 10 years and that Britain took it far more seriously than Russia did.[102] This is part of the difficulty of discussing the Great Game. Indeed, it is exceedingly difficult to pin the term down to a specific definition, and even more difficult to get everyone to agree with this definition. The meaning of the term has evolved over time beyond the description that was given in *Kim*, and so when historians debate the term today, those that argue in favour of the existence of the Game do not necessarily believe that it was as Kipling described it.

No doubt espionage between the British in India and the Russians did take place, as it does between all rival nations, but not on so grand a scale to be called a 'Great Game.' But this does not mean that there is no Great Game to talk about. The term 'Great Game' has evolved through centuries of discussion by historians to refer to the political conflict between Britain and Russia in Central Asia. It seems that historians are reluctant to give up the term, despite the fact that its original meaning had nothing to do with any kind of rivalry at all, and that its

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[98] Ibid, p.p. 5-6.
[99] Proclamation, by the Queen in Council, to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (published by the Governor General at Allahabad, November 1st, 1858), p. 1.
[100] G. Morgan, 'Myth and reality in the great game,' *Asian Affairs Vol 4, No. 1* (1973), p. 57.
[101] M. Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2000 Lectures and Memoirs,* Vol 111 (2001), p. 180.
[102] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 167.

second meaning is the result of a work of fiction. This can be explained simply by the fact that the term has become entrenched in the popular culture surrounding this time period. As such, a new definition of the term, grounded in actual historical fact, was slowly created over time by historians wanting to discuss the topic, but finding nothing to discuss. Thus, the term Great Game has been expanded to refer to all aspects of the political rivalry between British India and Russia, rather than just espionage. A common theme among all of the historians mentioned here is that all of them pay very little, if any, attention to the Mutiny of 1857 and subsequent transition from the East India Company to direct British Government control. Whatever the extent of the 'Great Game', the fact clearly remains that British India feared the possibility of a Russian invasion[103], and felt that they needed to take steps to prevent such an event.[104] When historians debate these issues, there is a tendency to treat the British side as a continuous, consistent governing body, when in fact, two different organisations oversaw the administration of India during this time period. The East India Company and the Government of India differed in many areas of policy, as the British Government took over administration of India as a direct response to the Company's failure to prevent internal strife in India.[105]

Historians of the Great Game generally do not distinguish between the East India Company and the Government of India when discussing the existence of the Game. As a result, many of their conclusions about the Game, while sound, are incomplete. The disagreements between the likes of Morgan and Yapp and the likes of Ingram about the significance of the Game can be partially explained by this gap. The East India Company did take the Game incredibly seriously and much of their foreign policy during this time period can be traced back to their desire to prevent Russia from gaining more influence in Central Asia. This includes their defence of Herat from Persia both in 1837 and in 1856, their expansion into other territories such as the Sind and the Punjab, and most significantly, their participation in the First Afghan War. Additionally, the desires of the East India Company should not be conflated by those of the British Government. While it is true that the British Government could issue orders to the East India Company if they wished, most of the day-to-day decisions about the defence of India were made by officials of the East India Company who were living in India. They had to be, due to the vast distances involved. While Yapp may have been right about the British Government prioritising Europe over Asia, as can be seen through the example of the Crimean War, the East

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[103] V. Terway, *East India Company and Russia, 1800-1857* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co, Ltd, 1977), p. 68.
[104] R. Kaushik, *The Army in British India: From Colonial Warfare to Total War 1857 – 1947* (London: A&C Black, 2013), p. 70.
[105] P.J. Rich, *Creating the Arabian Gulf: The Raj and the Invasions of the Gulf* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), p. 32.

India Company certainly did not. After all, if things had gone wrong in India, their lives would be at risk, and several of them were indeed killed.

Though the Great Game has been argued to have lasted from as early as 1832 to as late as 1907, this thesis will focus on the forty-two years surrounding the transition between the East India Company and the Government of India. The period has been set in this way so that it begins with the First Anglo-Afghan War and ends with the Second Anglo-Afghan War, so that the two organisations' reactions to similar situations can be directly compared. This period also contains several significant events said to be caused by the Great Game. These were the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Sikh Wars and the Crimean War under the East India Company and Russia's expansions into Central Asia in 1864 and 1868 and the Second Anglo-Afghan War under the Government of India. These will provide good points of comparison for the policies of each organisation. In the past, historians have studied the response of the East India Company and the Government of India to these events, but these were analysed separately, not as a comparison to each other. [106] [107] In addition, Gregory Fremont-Barnes wrote an analysis of the three Anglo-Afghan Wars, but this was an analysis of the military and political implications of the three wars, not a comparison of the East India Company and Government of India. [108]

In terms of archival documents, this thesis draws from three main sources; the India Office records at the British Library, the Cabinet Office and Foreign Office records at the National Archives, and the Roberts Papers at the National Army Museum. Though the thesis will endeavour to include Indian, Russian, Afghan and Persian perspectives, when possible, the majority of sources available regarding this topic are British. Moreover, the majority of them are from either official British Government sources, East India Company sources, or the diaries, memoirs or correspondence of British officials and generals. This poses a problem in that these officials had an interest in portraying themselves in the best possible light and may therefore exaggerate or even outright lie about events to that end. Sarah Ansari used the annexation of Sind, which will be covered in this thesis, as an example of the manipulation of the manipulation of the official record.[109] Ansari writes that, despite the controversy surrounding general Charles Napier's annexation at the time, including from eyewitnesses like Napier's subordinate James Outram, Napier's 'blue books' were still used as primary sources by

[106] Terway, *East India Company and Russia, 1800-1857*, p. 69.
[107] L. James, *Raj: The Making and Unmaking of British India* (London: Abacus, 1998)
[108] Fremont-Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars 1839–1919*, p. 2.
[109] S. Ansari, 'The Sind Blue Books of 1843 and 1844: The Political 'Laundering' of Historical Evidence' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 120, No. 485, (2005) p. 36.

historians of the time.[110] She explains that the books were altered to shift the blame for the annexation from Napier to the Amirs of Sind.[111] As this example shows, this thesis must be careful to not take the claims of the British officials at face value. However, as this thesis is about the mindset and motivations of the East India Company and British Government, understanding their perspective is still important, even if they are writing self-servingly. Furthermore, neither the British Government nor the East India Company were monoliths. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, the members of both governments often disagreed with each other on policy in India. Nonetheless, the thesis must acknowledge the colonial mindset inherent in these sources and balance it with alternate perspectives where possible.

The thesis will be separated into four chapters, covering the Great Game, the Afghan Wars, Persia, and Central Asia. The primary research questions that this thesis will seek to answer will include what was the Great Game? How did the change in the Government of India from the East India Company to direct British Government control alter the British approach to the Great Game? And which of the two governments, the East India Company or the British Government-controlled Government of India was more effective in the defence of India from the Russian threat? The argument will be made that the East India Company took a more militaristic, aggressive, and proactive approach to its conflict with Russia, often attempting to take territory before Russia could reach it and strengthen its borders, along with demonstrations of force to deter Russia or states backed by Russia from any expansions too close to India. The Government of India, however, took a more cautious and passive approach to the issue, avoiding military conflict as much as possible by utilising diplomacy and soft power to maintain influence in the region. This, the thesis will argue, was the result of the Government of India's desire to avoid those policies of the East India Company that they believed led to the 1857 Mutiny. The consequences of these approaches were mixed, with the East India Company's approach preventing significant Russian expansion into Central Asia, maintaining distance between the borders of India and the Russian Empire, but resulting in the alienation of potential allies and eventually leading to the Mutiny of 1857 and the dissolution of the Company. By contrast, the Government of India's approach led to a massive Russian expansion into Central Asia, with the border between Russian territory and India shrinking too almost nothing. However, they succeeded in one crucial area in which the Company failed, as they were much more successful in the Second Afghan War than the Company had been in the First. Throughout the Great Game Afghanistan was the most crucial of the neutral states, as

[110] Ibid, p.p. 36-38.
[111] Ibid, p. 38.

any invasion of India would be most likely to come from that direction and was treated as India's most important buffer by both governments. The Government of India were able to turn Afghanistan into a stable ally of India, while the East India Company's attempts to do the same resulted in abject failure. These points will be expanded upon in the following chapters. The purpose of this thesis is to challenge the implicit concept of continuity between the East India Company and the Government of India found in the historiography of the Great Game and demonstrate that the two governments responded to the threat of Russia in very different ways. By doing so, it will add crucial context to the understanding of the Game that has been left out of previous interpretations.

Chapter One: The Fiction and Reality of The Great Game

Before answering the question of how British participation in the Great Game changed with the change of government in India after 1857, more questions must be answered about the nature of the Great Game. The purpose of this chapter is to address the debates surrounding the Great Game, including the extent of its existence and when it began and ended. This chapter will be split into three parts. The first will address the debates surrounding whether the Great Game truly existed or was merely a figment of Rudyard Kipling's imagination. It will address the contradicting definitions of the Great Game that have been presented by historians and determine which of them are accurate. The second will address the debates around when the Great Game began and when it ended, if indeed it ever did. The third will then use the evidence presented in the first two sections to address how the Game changed after government in India changed from the East India Company to direct British rule after the 1857 Mutiny, which will then be further explored in the chapters on Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia.

What was the Great Game?

There is much debate and uncertainty surrounding the Great Game. Historians do not agree on what it was and if it even existed. This section of the chapter will address each of the arguments opposing the existence of the Great Game and will define the meaning of the Game as this thesis will refer to throughout. Much of the confusion surrounding the existence of the Great Game has been caused by the lack of a set definition of the term, with different historians arguing that it existed or did not based on contradictory definitions, meaning that they are often not directly addressing each other's points. Firstly, there are the group of historians who define the term most strictly as referring only to the concept that Kipling wrote about in his novel *Kim.* Gerald Morgan, for example, initially argues against the existence of the Great Game, using almost exclusively arguments against the existence of a dedicated intelligence service in India, claiming that the existence of such was entirely within Kipling's imagination.[1] He makes some comments at the beginning of his article stating that the originator of the term, the East India Company's political agent, Captain Arthur Conolly, intended it to refer to the Christianisation of Afghanistan, not any kind of rivalry with Russia.[2] However, later in the article he refers to Political Officers whose job it was to influence the

[1] G. Morgan, 'Myth and reality in the great game,' *Asian Affairs* Vol. 4, No. 1 (1973), p. 56.
[2] Ibid, p. 55.

major Khanates in the event of a Russian invasion.[3] This would be considered evidence of the Great Game by most of the other historians mentioned in this thesis, and yet Morgan does not seem to consider it so. Instead, he focuses on the fact that these Political Officers travelled openly, were not spies, and did not enter Russian-occupied territory without permission.[4]

Morgan goes on to point out that the Ethnographical Department used in Kipling's novel as a cover for espionage did not exist in reality, and that it's real equivalent, the Survey Department, was exactly as it appeared to be, an organisation that surveyed the geography of India.[5] This would later be expanded to the regions surrounding India, requiring Indian surveyors to be used rather than British ones as they could pass unnoticed and would not be attacked by the men of hostile nations. It is this, according to Morgan, that gave rise to the rumours of espionage that were the basis of Kipling's novel.[6] Morgan goes on to say that the British army was among the last to develop an intelligence service, and that the army in India even lagged behind that, only doing so in 1879.[7] Even then, its sphere of influence did not cover territories owned by Russia, which were covered by the intelligence service of Britain itself. However, the lack of a formal intelligence service should not be taken to mean that no espionage was taking place. Morgan seems fixated on the fact that the army, specifically, did not have a formal intelligence division, but points out himself that the Foreign Department of the Government of India regarded the idea of the army forming one with scorn, because they believed they already knew all about intelligence themselves, and needed no support from the army.[8] Morgan does not follow up on this point, but if intelligence was already being gathered by the Foreign Department, then the lack of a formal intelligence division of the army does not disprove the existence of the Great Game at all. Indeed, even if the Great Game did not exist, the idea that a government could exist that did not conduct any espionage towards its potentially hostile neighbours, seems highly unlikely. Furthermore, in the minutes of a meeting of the East India Company's Court of Directors from 1839, it is decided that 'this court, adverting to the unprecedented sum disbursed in the last seven months of the past year for Secret Service amounting to £51.425 is of the opinion that whenever the Secret Committee may be called upon to make large and unusual disbursements for Secret Service, it will be

[3] Ibid, p. 59.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid, p. 56.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid, p. 57.
[8] Ibid.

proper for the Committee to obtain authority from the Board.'[9] Morgan's article seems focused on disproving the specific description of the Great Game that is depicted in Kipling's novel, *Kim*, but the fact that the Game did not take place exactly as it was described in a work of dramatized historical fiction does not preclude its existence.

Morgan describes the Indian Political Service, founded by the East India Company in 1820. This organisation, he argues, was the only organisation in India which could have organised a secret service.[10] Morgan explains that officers of this organisation, including the political agents Arthur Conolly, Henry Rawlinson, and Alexander Burnes, did travel through Russia and Central Asia, sometimes in disguise, albeit an unconvincing one, and that many of them did expect a clash with Russia to come one day.[11] Morgan argues that these officers were more like diplomats than spies, but mentions that they did develop local spy networks wherever they were posted, he simply claims that these networks provided very little useful information about Russia.[12] However, arguing that the Political Service were not very effective at spying is not the same as arguing that no spying existed at all. Again, Morgan seems more interested in disproving the claims of a work of fiction than in disproving the existence of spy networks in Central Asia.

Morgan does not claim that no spying existed in the region during this time period, only that it was not very effective. However, he makes a distinction between this spying and the 'Great Game' described by Kipling. He goes on to argue that the first true instance of an organised attempt by India to spy on the Russian army occurred in 1865, when the Viceroy Lord Lawrence sent four agents to ascertain the strengths and organisational structure of the Russian army, and that there was no more indication of British attempts to spy on the Russian army until 1874, when Lord Salisbury the Secretary of State for India, specifically complained that he was getting very little information on Russia out of India.[13] After Lord Lytton became Viceroy, he then set up a frontier intelligence service under British Representative Louis Cavagnari, which Morgan claims was only intended to gather information from the frontier and Afghanistan, and not from any Russian controlled territory.[14] However considering Afghanistan's crucial strategic role in the conflict between Britain and Russia in the region, and

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[9] Secret Minutes of the East India Company Court of Directors, 1 May 1839, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, p. 157.
[10] Morgan, 'Myth and reality in the Great Game,' p. 58.
[11] Ibid, p. 58.
[12] Ibid, p. 59.
[13] Ibid, pp. 60-61.
[14] Ibid, p. 61.

the significance of the Afghan Wars, this information would actually have been very useful in defending against Russia. Furthermore, though Morgan does not draw attention to it or even mention the transition between the East India Company and the post 1857 Government of India, his work gives the impression that the Government utilised espionage more often and more effectively than the East India Company. All of the instances of organised attempts to spy on Russia that Morgan describes took place after 1857, indicating that the Government of India were more involved in the 'Game' than the Company were. However, as Morgan does not draw attention to this fact, it is unlikely that Morgan was intending to make this argument and was instead simply treating the Company and its replacement as one continuous organisation, as most historians do. Morgan's narrow focus on combatting the misconceptions about the Great Game caused by Kipling's fictional dramatization causes him to define the 'Great Game' in a very specific way. By the definition he uses, the Great Game did indeed not exist, but that is not the way that historians define the term 'Great Game' as it is used today.

In a later text, he appears to change his mind somewhat, saying that he dislikes the term 'Great Game' as it could be misleading.[15] He writes that the term implies a rather light-hearted conflict, when in reality those involved took it very seriously.[16] He concedes, however that the term 'Great Game' has come to stay, asking that the term only be used to refer to the conflict between Britain and Russia in Asia, rather than any other conflict.[17] In this later book, he is less focused on the question of espionage, writing that explorers such as Conolly were seen as spies by the Russians even if they were not spies in reality.[18] He appears to have expanded his definition of the Great Game to encompass the entire conflict rather than only the question of espionage, and now writes that it did exist in the sense that Britain and Russia were incredibly suspicious of one another and each believed that the other planned to annex the khanates of Central Asia.[19] However, he still maintains that the British in India had no real interest in espionage and that the depiction of the Game in *Kim* was misleading.[20]

Robert Johnson defends this concept of the Great Game, referring to the Game as 'the struggle to secure and maintain geo-strategic supremacy in Asia in order to protect India, Britain's largest imperial possession. More specifically it involved the gathering of intelligence on

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[15] G. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 16.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, p. 20.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid, p. 146.

potential threats and the winning over of Asian rulers.'[21] He argues that although Kipling exaggerated and invented some aspects of the Game as presented in *Kim*, it was still based on a recognisable reality.[22] He argues that Morgan's assertion that British officers did not train central Asian troops was disproven by the example of Persia.[23] His book is focused on the development of British intelligence with a focus on Asian agents.[24] Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac take a similar approach, referring to their first mentioned participant in the Game, William Moorcroft, as being employed as an intelligence scout.[25] They speak of his commanding officer, Charles Metcalfe, as having created a spy network while an envoy at the court of Ranjit Singh, the Maharajah of the Sikh Empire, and having put together an espionage team to clear the way for a British offensive during the Afghan Wars, but that he later changed his mind about covert operations.[26] They note, however, that Metcalfe's objection to Alexander Burnes being sent on a spying mission to Ranjit Singh's court in 1831 was that this kind of deception would never be carried out against an equal European power.[27] This could indicate that espionage was limited to use against Asian states and would not have been used against Russia.

The existence of intelligence gathering in India during this time can be easily found in archival sources from the time. For example, Henry Ellis, ambassador to Persia, collected information from an Afghan nobleman named Hajee Hussein Ali indicating that Dost Mohammed Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, had been in communication with the Shah of Persia on the subject of the conquest and partition of Shah Kamran of Herat's territories in the build up to the Persian invasion of Herat in 1837.[28] Ellis reported this information to Viscount Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary and this invasion did indeed come to pass. In 1874 William Taylour Thomson received information from an agent in Asterabad, Persia, unnamed in the document, about a conflict between Russia and the Yemoot Turkoman tribes, which resided within their territory.[29] Taylour Thomson would continue to receive these reports that told of the declining

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[21] R. Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 21.
[22] Ibid, p. 26.
[23] Ibid, p. 31.
[24] Ibid, p. 33.
[25] K. Meyer and S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India* (Berkely: Counterpoint, 1999), p. 26.
[26] Ibid, p. 55
[27] Ibid, pp. 55-56
[28] Letter from Mr Ellis to Viscount Palmerston, 25 February 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 11.
[29] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 30 May 1974, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 12.

relationship between Russia and Persia.[30] Similar agents reported on the movements of Sher Ali Khan's army during the Second Afghan War.[31] J.W. Kaye wrote of how his colleague, D'Arcy Todd, employed a boy named Saleh Mohammed to relate the details of the executions of Arthur Conolly and Charles Stoddart.[32] Whether or not these examples constitute espionage is a matter of opinion. They are not the complex spy networks described in *Kim*, but that does not mean that they do not count as intelligence gathering.

For example, in 1874 Lord Augustus Loftus, the Ambassador to Russia, wrote a confidential letter to the Earl of Derby and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Edward Stanley, reporting on Russia's relationship with its various Asian territories.[33] Loftus was not a spy, he was an ambassador, and his presence in Russia was by no means a secret. Nonetheless, he was able to report information to the British about Russia's influence in Asia that they would not otherwise have had. Likewise, Ellis was an official ambassador to Persia. The same is true of the Political Officers such as Arthur Conolly, Charles Stoddart, D'Arcy Todd and James Abbott, who, as was pointed out by Morgan, did not travel in secret and were openly known to the rulers of the countries they were assigned to.[34] Indeed this was the entire point, as their missions were to negotiate with these rulers and convince them not to allow Russian influence into their countries. Abbott himself stated that the purpose of these missions was to 'provide a barrier between India and Europe.'[35] But a formal intelligence service and espionage network is not necessarily needed for the gathering of information. It is undeniable that both the official ambassadors sent to surrounding nations and the Political Agents sent to negotiate with the Khans, leaders of the independent Khanates in Central Asia which were located between the areas of British and Russian influence in Asia, did provide important information to their superiors in India, information that would also eventually be relayed back to Britain as time and distance allowed.

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[30] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 22 December 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 119.
[31] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr R. Thomson, 9 November 1879, Confidential (4100.) Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia (In continuation of Confidential Paper No. 3871), Dec 1878 - Dec 1879, The National Archives, FO 539/16, p. 19.
[32] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3* (London, R. Bentley, 1857-58), p. 257
[33] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 28 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 13-14.
[34] Morgan, 'Myth and reality in the great game,' p. 56.
[35] J. Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, (London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1884), p. 93.

Another potential example of espionage during this period took place during the First Sikh War. The Sikh Army was led by Lal and Tej Singh, but the two were later discovered to have been supplying information and even receiving instructions from the Company's officers, betraying their own men. In particular, Lal Singh was said to be betraying state secrets to a British political officer throughout the war. Joseph Cunningham, an officer of the East India Company who fought in the war, mentions an article in the *Calcutta Review* which admitted that Lal Singh had reported Sikh battle plans to Company officers multiple times, though he cannot provide such evidence against Tej Singh.[36] Cunningham believed that the two had been planning to sabotage the war before it had even begun, and had in fact planned from the beginning to force the Sikhs into a war they could not win in order to retain their power.[37] He states that 'their desire was to be upheld as the ministers of a dependent kingdom by grateful conquerors'.[38] However Charles Gough, another officer in the army, argued that there was no proof that the two were traitors, although as Gough was the brother of Hugh Gough, Commander in Chief of the army at the time, he may have been trying to ensure that his brother's victory was seen as being due to his own military prowess.[39] Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Ashburnham, who fought in the First Sikh War, writes that Lal Singh had written to the political agent Peter Nicolson before the Battle of Ferozepore to say he was a friend to the British and wished to prevent their being attacked, and that Nicholson responded that if he wished to give proof, he should withdraw his cavalry, which Lal Singh did.[40] This form of espionage, despite having not happened during a conflict with Russia, lends some credence to the idea that the East India Company were carrying out such operations throughout this time period. Cunningham believed that the two, desiring more power, were sabotaging the war in order to gain influence with the Company, who were at the time content to leave the Sikhs as dependant allies rather than annex the Punjab outright, though that would soon change.[41]

Secondly, there are those who define the Great Game as the political conflict between the British and Russian Empires for dominance in Asia. This is primarily the argument of those who argue for the existence of the Great Game, however there are those who argue against even this definition. These include Malcolm Yapp, who argues that the Anglo-Russian rivalry in India

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[36] J. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej* (London: J. Murray, 1849), p. 292.
[37] Ibid, pp. 284-285.
[38] Ibid, p. 291.
[39] C. Gough and A.D. Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: The Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State* (India: A.D. Innes & Company, 1897), p. 65.
[40] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 January 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), p. 65.
[41] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*, p. 331.

was secondary to their rivalry in Europe, and that as Russia never planned to invade India, instead using the threat of invasion to exert pressure on Europe, the whole concept of the Game was irrelevant.[42] Yapp also addresses the confusion surrounding the definition of the Great Game, suggesting two possible definitions of the Game that are in common use, that of espionage between secret British and Russian agents in Central Asia, and a broader definition simply referring to the political rivalry between Britain and Russia in the region.[43] He argues that the term 'Great Game' only rose to prominence after the Second World War, and that attempts by historians to trace its origins back through Kipling to Kaye to the East India Company's political agent, Arthur Conolly have exaggerated its pedigree and given a false impression that the term is older than it actually is.[44] He argues that the term matters as it shaped modern perception of events exaggerating the extent of Anglo-Russian rivalry during this time period.[45] He ends by explaining that he named his lecture 'The Legend of the Great Game' because he believed the term stood for a mistaken, strategic view of Empire.[46]

M.J. Bayly also argued against the concept of the Great Game, suggesting that rather than being the result of fear of the threat of Russia, the British creation of buffer states in Asia was the result of imperialism, and that in fact Britain and Russia shared a discourse on 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' states.[47] He argues that in fact there was a degree of Anglo-Russian co-operation over Afghanistan and Persia.[48] He presents the case that Britain would rather have had Russia as a neighbour in Asia than any of the Muslim nations that surrounded them, seeing it as a civilising force similar to themselves.[49] However, this analysis fails to consider that the East India Company, according to its own Governor-General Lord Auckland, was greatly concerned about the subservience of Persia to Russia and wished to ensure that this would not happen in Afghanistan.[50] The Company also intervened to prevent Russia's occupation of Khiva by negotiating to have the Russian slaves which were Russia's pretext for invading freed.[51] He

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[42] M. Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2000 Lectures and Memoirs* 111 (2001), pp. 189-190.
[43] Ibid, p. 180.
[44] Ibid, p. 187.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid, p. 198.
[47] M. J. Bayly, 'Imperial ontological insecurity: Buffer States, International relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878', *European Journal of International Relations,* Vol 18, No 2 (2015), p. 830.
[48] Ibid, p. 829.
[49] Ibid, p. 832.
[50] Letter from Lord Auckland to Mr McNeil, 15 September 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2 p. 46.
[51] Letter from E. D. Todd to L. R. Reid, Chief Secretary to the Government, Bombay, 9 September 1840, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 26, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/388, p. 10.

concludes that while there was certainly Anglo-Russian competition over Central Asia, British policy towards states like Afghanistan were often driven instead by their perceptions of the particular states themselves.[52]

The most prominent opponent of the arguments of Morgan and Yapp is Peter Hopkirk, who defends both ideas of the definition of the Great Game. He depicts the actions of the Political Officers, which he describes in a similar manner to Morgan, as evidence of the espionage-related definition of the Game.[53] He goes on to also describe the creation of buffer states and the invasion of independent states as having been part of the Game as well.[54] But Hopkirk goes further than this and presents the Great Game not only as a specific conflict between Britain and Russia but also as a concept which encapsulates all conflicts between major powers in Asia and especially the Middle-East. He suggests that a second Great Game took place between Britain and Russia after the Russian Revolution as the newly Communist Russia attempted to spread the ideology to India.[55] He also suggests that the modern day conflicts in Afghanistan are also a new version of the Great Game, with the United States taking the place of Britain in the conflict.[56] In Hopkirk's view then, the term Great Game does not even need to refer to a conflict between Britain and Russia, but rather any political rivalry between major powers in the region. This is exactly the expansion of the meaning of the term that Morgan expresses dislike of in his own work.[57] This, then, could be considered a third possible definition of the Great Game.

In 2013, Geoffrey Hamm wrote an article heavily criticising Hopkirk's interpretation of the Game and praising Malcolm and Yapp's interpretations. In particular, he states that while authors like Hopkirk 'admit that Kipling's secret service never existed and that *Kim's* Great Game is equally unreal, their work nevertheless appears to operate on the assumption that something similar did exist.'[58] He criticises Hopkirk and others like him such as Meyer and Brysac for exaggerating and generalising in their work, and of praising imperialism. Specifically, he points out that Hopkirk's depictions of British agents always paint them as noble and

[52] Ibid, p. 834.
[53] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray Press, 1990), p. 5.
[54] Ibid, p. 6.
[55] P. Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia* (London: John Murray Press, 1984), p. 1.
[56] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game* (London: John Murray Press, 2006), pp. iii-iv.
[57] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 16.
[58] G. Hamm, 'Revisiting the Great Game in Asia: Rudyard Kipling and popular history,' *International Journal,* Vol. 68, No. 2 (2013), p. 396.

heroic, while both the Russians and native leaders such as Dost Mohammed are always depicted as being bloodthirsty and treacherous.

For the purposes of this thesis, the broader definition of the Great Game as the rivalry between Britain and Russia for political control of Asia will be used. This is because it is the definition of the term used by the majority of modern historians. The existence of a rivalry between Britain and Russia over influence in Asia can be seen throughout the correspondence of both the East India Company and the directly British controlled Government of India after 1857. Prior to 1835, the East India Company had been pursuing a policy of non-intervention in other nations. It was when Lord Auckland was appointed Governor-General, the highest-ranking member of the East India Company in India, in that year, that he was directly ordered by the India Board to counteract the progress of Russian influence in the region. A possible reason for this was the encroachment of Russia into Persia, which had until this point served as one of India's buffer states against European invasion. Under the East India Company, Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of India from 1836-1842, expresses great concern about Persia's supposed 'servility' to Russia in his letters to John McNeil, the envoy to Persia.[59] Viscount Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary and later Prime Minister, expressed similar sentiments, worrying that Russia and Persia were working together to weaken the influence of British India.[60] A later Government of India report analysing correspondence from the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston is of the opinion that, while initially Britain and Russia agreed on the selection of Mohammed Mirza as ruler of Persia in 1834, by 1838, Russia had 'complete ascendancy over the Shah's mind' and 'the brief understanding between the British and Russian Governments on the subject of Persia became a complete farce'.[61] With Persia lost to Russian influence, Afghanistan became the most important buffer for the Company to defend, and this would become Auckland's top priority. The envoy to Persia, John McNeil, who was assigned there between 1824 and 1844, believed that the Russian Government were influencing Afghanistan to ally with Persia against the Sikhs.[62] Alexander Burnes, who was an envoy to Afghanistan at the time, spoke of a meeting with Amir Dost Mohammed Khan in which he expressed his fear that Russia were using Persia as a proxy to create an empire in

[59] Letter from Lord Auckland to Mr McNeil, 15 September 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 46.
[60] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Mr McNeil, 12 October 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 86.
[61] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Lord Clarincade, 26 October 1838, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, India Office 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 234.
[62] Letter from Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, 10 April 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/1, p. 12.

Asia just as Britain had done with India.[63] Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General from 1848-1856), expressed his belief that the Crimean War with Russia has made it expedient to consider an alliance with Dost Mohammed and Afghanistan, despite the First Afghan War.[64]

Under the Government of India, during the Second Afghan War, Lord Robert Bulwer-Lytton, the Viceroy of India, the Government of India's equivalent to a Governor-General, from 1876-1880, expressed concern that negotiating with Abdur Rahman Khan, who had been in negotiations with Russia in the past, would be the same as negotiating with Russia, though he did eventually accept Abdur Rahman as an ally.[65] Lytton's correspondence also reveals that his reasoning for starting the Second Afghan War was that a Russian diplomatic mission was admitted to Afghanistan while a British one was turned away.[66] These examples demonstrate that the British leadership of both the East India Company and Government of India at least believed themselves to be in a political rivalry with Russia for control of Asia. On the Russian side, the envoy Prince Gorchakov continued to insist that Russia had no interest in India, even as more and more Asian countries fell under Russian control and the borders of the Russian empire crept closer and closer to India.[67]

When did the Great Game Begin and End?

With the existence of the Great Game determined and its meaning defined, the next important question to answer is when the Game can be considered to have begun and ended. This, too, has been heavily debated among historians. Edward Ingram and Evgeny Sergeev presented two opposing arguments on the origins and outcome of the Game. Ingram argued that the Game only lasted for a very short time, beginning in the 1830s and ending in a defeat for Britain in the First Afghan War in 1842.[68] In his view, the First Afghan War was an irreparable failure to prevent Russia from gaining power in Asia, because Britain failed to acquire Afghanistan as a client state.[69] Therefore according to his argument, though he does not explicitly state this, the East India Company participated in the Great Game, while the

[63] Letter from Captain Burnes to Mr Macnaghten, 19 November 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 70.
[64] F. Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* (London, Bentley and Son, 1898), p. 28.
[65] Minute by the Viceroy Lytton, 19 August 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, pp. 1-2.
[66] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to Viscount Cranbrook, 26 September 1878, Confidential (3871.) Further Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, Nov 1877 - Dec 1878, The National Archives, FO 539/15, p. 147.
[67] Letter from the Foreign Office to Sir Andrew Buchanan, 14 September 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 9.
[68] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 167.
[69] Ibid.

Government of India under direct British rule did not. By contrast, Sergeev argues that the Great Game didn't begin until after 1856, as a result of the Crimean War.[70] As a result, his analysis of the Game barely covers the East India Company and instead focuses almost entirely on the Government of India. This means that in Ingram's view, the Second Afghan War does not count as part of the Great Game, while in Sergeev's view, the First Afghan War did not, despite the numerous similarities between the two Afghan Wars.

Peter Hopkirk traces the origins of the Great Game back to 1810, when, fearing a joint attack on India from Napoleon's France and Russia, the East India Company's Major-General John Malcolm offered the services of British officers to train and modernise the Persian army, while Eldred Pottinger and Charles Christie were sent on a reconnaissance mission to Afghanistan.[71] He argues that the first Russian player of the Game was Nikolai Muraviev, who was sent in 1819 to deliver gifts and an offer of alliance with the Khanate of Khiva, but also to observe everything possible about Khiva's defences and wealth.[72] Khiva was a state in Central Asia comprising parts of modern-day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with the city of Khiva as its capital. It lay between the parts of Asia under the influence of Britain and Russia, and therefore was sought after by both sides of the Game. As to the end of the Game, Hopkirk notes that some would maintain that the Great Game never really ceased, and that it was merely the forerunner of the Cold War of our own times, 'fuelled by the same fears, suspicions and misunderstandings'.[73] At the end of his book he suggests that the Game ended in 1907 with the agreements between Britain and Russia in the Anglo-Russian Convention, in which Russia agreed that Afghanistan lay within Britain's sphere of influence, and to divide Persia between the two powers.[74] However, he then argues that the end of the Game did not last long, as the Russian Revolution of 1917 led to the downfall of the old Tsarist Government, and the new Bolshevik Government was not beholden to treaties made by its predecessor.[75] In another work, he argues that, as India was the richest of all imperial possessions, and Britain was still the foremost imperial power, it was the biggest obstacle to Lenin's plan for world revolution.[76] He argues that, for the British at least, the Game didn't truly end until they gave up their Empire in India.[77] In the same book, written in 1984, he states that 'its echoes are

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[70] E. Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2013), p. 3.
[71] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* pp. 36-39.
[72] Ibid, pp. 77-78.
[73] Ibid, pp. 7-8.
[74] Ibid, pp. 520-522.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia*, p. 1.
[77] Ibid, pp. 239-240.

being heard today in Afghanistan and elsewhere. For there the Great Game still goes on. Only the players are different.'[78] Later in 2006, he elaborated on this, explaining that the United States took the place of Britain as Russia's opponent in the Game.[79]

Another historian who agrees with Hopkirk's assertion that the Game did not end with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was Jennifer Siegel, who argued that although the 1907 agreement became part of the interconnected European alliance structure that led Britain and Russia to fight as allies in the First World War, the priorities and aims that drove their Central Asian policy continued to drive their policy after the agreement was signed.[80] However, she argues that the First World War and Bolshevik Revolution altered the situation such that the Game could no longer be considered the same, disagreeing with Hopkirk.[81] She argues that the agreement was on the verge of collapse by 1914, that the Russian 'forward' policies in Asia did not change after the agreement, and that by 1914 British and Russian Central Asian policies were no longer reconcilable.[82] She concludes that the 1907 agreement is considered a success only because the war that broke out in 1914 was not between Britain and Russia, and because that war irrevocably changed the Russian political system such that the old relationships between nations no longer applied.[83] She argues that the only reason that the Russians even agreed to the terms preserving the Central Asian status quo in the first place was to recover from their defeat against Japan and the first, failed revolution in 1905, and always intended to resume its 'forward' policy in Central Asia in order to re-establish itself as a great power.[84] She pays little attention to the beginning of the Game as this is not the purpose of her book, only noting that Conolly was thought to have coined the term in 1835.[85]

Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac begin their account of the Great Game with the journey of William Moorcroft to Tibet to acquire better horses for the East India Company in 1812, a journey in which he learned that Russians had already reached remote corners of the country.[86] According to Meyer and Brysac, this would foreshadow a century of British obsession with the Russian advance into Asia.[87] Afterwards in 1819, Moorcroft would be sent

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[78] Ibid, p. 5.
[79] Hopkirk, *The Great Game,* pp. iii-iv.
[80] J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002) pp. xvii.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid, p. xviii.
[83] Ibid, pp. 196-197.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, p. xv.
[86] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India*, p. 20.
[87] Ibid.

on more journeys to 'procure horses' that were actually pretexts for intelligence scouting into Afghanistan and Bukhara.[88] Like Khiva, the Emirate of Bukhara was in Central Asia, containing parts of modern-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Its main population centres were its capital, also named Bukhara, and the city of Samarkand, both of which would come under attack from Russia later in the Game. Meyer and Brysac agree with Hopkirk that Lenin's Bolsheviks carried out their own version of the Great Game, smuggling arms and Communist ideology to Tibet with the goal of eventually linking India with 'the centre of the world revolution', Russia.[89] Their analysis of the Game continues all the way through the Second World War and includes Mao's China and Nazi Germany as participants.[90]

The purpose of this thesis is not to determine the exact beginning and ending dates of the Great Game, and indeed when studying a concept so subjective doing so may be impossible. As the Game can be defined as the political struggle between Britain and Russia in Central Asia, determining the date of the beginning of the Game would require determining when each side first perceived itself as participating in that conflict. William Dalrymple argued that the Game began in 1828 with a letter from Lord Ellenborough which suggested that Russia were planning to invade Persia to secure a path to India.[91] However, as presented earlier in this chapter other historians such as Hopkirk, Meyer and Brysac have produced examples of earlier events that could be considered part of the Game. Though his argument on the beginning date of the Great Game is contradicted by examples such as the First Afghan War and annexation of Sind which took place before 1856, Sergeev's argument that it ended with the three Anglo-Russian agreements of 1907 is a convincing one, as this was an official treaty which supposedly set British and Russian spheres of influence in Asia in stone.[92] However, arguments against it have been made, particularly Jennifer Siegel's argument that Russia did not take these agreements seriously, continuing to expand into Persia, and that therefore the Game would have been restarted if not for the interruption of the First World War.[93] Hopkirk argues that a new Game between Britain and the newly Communist Russia then began after the end of that war.[94] Morgan argues that, for clarity's sake, the term 'Great Game' should only be used to refer to the conflict between Britain and Russia in Asia, and not as a blanket term to refer to any

[88] Ibid, p. 26.
[89] Ibid, p. 464.
[90] Ibid, p. 528.
[91] W. Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 52-53.
[92] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 3
[93] Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, p.p. xvi-xviii
[94] Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin's Dream of an Empire in Asia*, p. 1.

political conflict between major powers in Asia.[95] If this argument is accepted, then the 1907 agreement should be considered as the ending date for the Game.

The purpose of this thesis is not to determine the exact dates of the beginning and end of the Great Game, but rather to determine how the Game changed when the East India Company was replaced by the direct British rule of the Government of India. To that end, the time period covered in this thesis begins with the outbreak of the First Afghan War, by which time the Game had begun, the War being a reaction to the fear of a potential Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan. Likewise, while the date of the end of the Great Game is also disputed, this thesis ends with the Second Afghan War, which was likewise intertwined with the political rivalry between Britain and Russia. These dates have been selected as the purpose of this thesis is to examine the transition between the East India Company and the direct British rule of the Government of India, and the changes that took place in the Great Game as a result. These dates have been chosen so that the analysis begins with the First Afghan War and ends with the Second, in order to assess the two governments' responses to similar problems. Theses dates also ensure that the 1857 Mutiny that caused this transition falls close to the middle of the time period, as it is the turning point that this thesis is centred around and allows each government to be analysed for a similar period of its rule. In service of this analysis, the main arguments that must be addressed in this chapter are that of Ingram, who argues that the Game effectively ended after the First Afghan War in 1842, and Sergeev, who argued that the Game did not begin until 1856.

The Afghan Wars themselves provide perhaps the most conclusive proof that the Great Game was in effect throughout the period from 1838-1880, because the causes of both wars were intrinsically tied to the Great Game. However, they are significant and complex enough to require their own chapter, so they will not be covered in detail here. Likewise, the Persian invasions of Herat were also influenced by Russian expansion in the region, but these will be covered in detail in the chapter on Persia. For the purposes of this chapter, Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary in 1838, wrote that he believed that the Russian Ambassador Count Simonich was responsible for the Persian invasion of Herat in 1837.[96] Henry Ellis, the former envoy to Persia, expressed similar sentiments, saying that Persia was 'the first parallel from whence the attack may be commenced or threatened'.[97] John McNeil, the new envoy, wrote

[95] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 16.
[96] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Lord Clarincade, 26 October 1838, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, India Office, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 235.
[97] H. Durand (ed), *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1879), p. 30.

to the Governor-General Lord Auckland saying that Russia planned to assist Persia financially in their invasion.[98] The First Afghan War also began when a Russian envoy was accepted in Afghanistan, but Auckland's own envoy was expelled.[99] This should demonstrate that the East India Company were driven by a rivalry with Russia in Asia, and that they saw Afghanistan and Persia as part of that conflict in 1838. This means that Sergeev's argument that the Great Game did not begin until 1856 cannot be correct.

The Second Afghan War also began because of a Russian envoy being accepted into Afghanistan while a British envoy was turned away. The Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton, wrote that the rejection of the British envoy meant that diplomacy was no longer possible.[100] Furthermore the Government of India actually succeeded where the East India Company failed in securing Afghanistan as a strong ally under its new Amir, Abdur Rahman Khan, by offering to protect Afghanistan militarily in case of invasion in exchange for allowing the British to control Afghanistan's foreign policy.[101] If Ingram's argument that the East India Company lost the Game when they failed to take control of Afghanistan in 1842 is to be believed, then it could be argued that the Government of India were able to reverse that loss in 1880. They did not have direct control of Afghanistan, but the fact that they had control of its foreign policy meant that Afghanistan had essentially become the client state that the company had intended it to be years earlier. If the Government of India were acting in the Second Afghan War in response to their rivalry with Russia in Asia in 1880, then the Great Game cannot be said to have ended in 1842.

Besides the examples of Afghanistan and Persia, which will be covered in more detail in their own chapters, there are several other examples of events in the Great Game that prove that the Game was still taking place between 1842 and 1856, during the time that Ingram would argue that the Game was already over, and as Sergeev would argue, it had not even started yet. For example, in 1843, the East India Company carried out an annexation of the Sind region. General Charles Napier annexed the region, defeating a coalition of Baloch tribes in two battles, the Battle of Miani and the Battle of Dubbo. The Kingdom of Sind (also spelled as Sindh or Scinde), was perceived by the Company to be ruled inefficiently by a group of Talpur

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[98] Letter from Mr McNeil to Lord Auckland, 11 April 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/1, p. 25.
[99] T.A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1980), pp. 26-27.
[100] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to Viscount Cranbrook, 26 September 1878, Confidential (3871.) Further Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, Nov 1877 - Dec 1878, The National Archives, FO 539/15, p. 147.
[101] Letter from A.C. Lyall, to His Highness Sirdar Abdul Rahman Khan, Amir of Kabul, 20 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/36, p. 4.

Amirs, and therefore an easier target than the Punjab, requiring much less preparation to invade. The Talpur Dynasty had been the rulers of Sind since 1783, and were split into four branches, each of which ruled a different section of Sind. The Company had been increasingly involved in the Sind, and their Amirs had signed a series of treaties in 1809 and 1838, allowing the Company increased access. When the Company planned to put Shah Shuja on the throne of Afghanistan, they signed a treaty with Ranjit Singh, which included provisions that Shuja must abide by any ruling on Sind that was decided by the British, and that he must give up all claims to the territory in exchange for a payment to be determined by the British.[102] Initially, these affairs were handled by Major James Outram, the political agent assigned to Sind, who gained the trust of the Amirs and was able negotiate the admittance of the Company's soldiers through the Sind and the use of their fortress at Bukkur for use in the First Afghan War.[103] Outram writes that, because of his long residence in Sind as a political agent, he was able to understand the characters and feelings of the Amirs and their people, something he claims Napier never understood.[104]

Tensions rose, however, when the Company began to meddle in the Sind's internal affairs. One issue that offended the Amirs was the condition of a treaty from March 1839 signed with the Company that forbade them from levying any taxes on boats carrying goods through their territory along the River Indus.[105] Outram received a letter from the Secretary to the Government of India stating that, though the Amirs believed it was their right to tax their own subjects and were greatly dissatisfied with this provision it was necessary for the protection of commerce in the region and therefore must remain.[106] On another occasion, Outram quotes a conversation he had with Meer Noor Mohammed, one of the Amirs of Sind, proposing a new treaty on the orders of Governor-General Auckland that would require the Sind to give up the district of Shikarpoor.[107] Meer Noor Mohammed replied 'here is another annoyance. Since the day that Scinde (sic) has been connected with the English, there has always been something

[102] Tripartite Treaty signed by Lord Auckland, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, sent by W. Macnaghten to Mr McNeil 26 July 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/1, pp. 50-51.
[103] J. Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1846), p. 30.
[104] Ibid, p. 3.
[105] Letter from H. Torrens, Secretary to the Government of India, to J. Outram, 22 June 1840, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 24, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/386, p. 296.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, pp. 33-35.

new, you are never satisfied.'[108] This led Outram to advise Auckland to only ask the Amirs for that which the Company absolutely needed, and no more than that.[109]

This was made worse with the advent of the First Afghan War, as the Amirs opposed the Company's choice of Amir for Afghanistan, Shah Shuja Durrani. Outram wrote that the only real danger to the Company's interests in Sind came when they were defeated in the First Afghan War, and therefore made vulnerable during their retreat from Afghanistan.[110] Because of this the Sind began to drift away from the Company's influence and closer to the Russian-backed Persia. As early as 1838, Auckland had become concerned about the loyalty of the Amirs after learning that they were in correspondence with the Shah of Persia.[111] Charles Napier's brother, William, a retired British officer and historian, believed that Auckland's worry over Sind was the result of Russia's interference in Central Asia.[112] Outram reported six men claiming to be agents of the Shah of Persia arriving in Hyderabad and meeting with the Amirs in 1840, though he could not be sure whether they were telling the truth about their identities.[113] William Napier also reported that his brother was presented with a list of accusations against the Amirs, which included that they had been exchanging secret messages with the Shah of Persia and were plotting to attack the Company due to their recent defeat in Afghanistan.[114] Outram acknowledges having done this, but says that he had just compiled all the charges that had been laid against the Amirs, as he had been ordered, and did not necessarily believe that all of them were accurate.[115] Nonetheless, Charles Napier believed it, saying that Outram would have been killed, just as his fellow political agent William Macnaghten had been in Afghanistan during the First Afghan War, if Napier was not sent to replace him.[116] Lieutenant Mylne, the officer assigned to Hyderabad, also believed the Amirs were conspiring against the Company, and feared that if they were to attack during the

[108] Ibid, p. 35-36.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid, p. 37.
[111] W. Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's conquest of Scinde,* (London: C. Westerton, 1857), p. 44.
[112] Ibid, p. 27.
[113] Intelligence from Lower Sind from Political Agent J. Outram, 19 June 1840, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 24, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/386, p. 408.
[114] Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's conquest of Scinde,* pp. 70-71.
[115] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, p. 40.
[116] C. J. Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military, of the Indian Government ... Edited (with a supplementary chapter) by Sir. W. F. P. Napier* (London: Charles Westerton, 1857), p. 84.

Company's retreat from Afghanistan at the end of the First Afghan War, the results could be disastrous.[117] In 1842 Napier was placed in charge of affairs in Sind, by the new Governor-General, Ellenborough. Another consideration that made it important for the Company to gain access to Sind was that they wanted access to both banks of the River Indus, which passed through Sind.[118] This was because the river would create a powerful natural barrier against any Russian advance.[119] Outram notes in his book that although he was replaced by Napier, Napier specifically requested Outram's services due to his experience in the region, which was granted by Ellenborough.[120]

Napier was assigned by Ellenborough to investigate the Amirs and learn if they were planning to betray the Company. Outram claimed three years later to have known that the accusations against the Amirs were false.[121] Specifically, he refers to Napier's accusation that the Amirs were tyrants who discriminated against Hindus in favour of Muslims, arguing that the discrimination in Sind was no worse than that in any other Muslim country, and was in fact less severe than that in the United States, which still practised the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, pointing out that no one would suggest that the Indian Army should invade the United States to prevent that.[122] Further, he wonders whether, if Russia were to invade the Ottoman Empire with the excuse that they must do so in order to end the discrimination against Greeks by the Turks, would the European powers accept that as an excuse?[123] The Company did intercept letters from the Amirs of Sind to Lahore, capital of the Sikh Empire, asking to be relieved of the 'burden' of British influence in their affairs.[124] Lieutenant Mylne, an officer in the army under Napier's command assigned to the city of Hyderabad, wrote that it was essential that the Company not admit the right of the Amirs to interfere with the Company's subjects, and said that Napier wrote to them strongly stating this.[125]

However, Ellenborough also had an ulterior motive, namely, to have Napier secure an agreement with the Amirs that would render them little more than a client state.[126] Napier, in

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[117] Intelligence report by C.D. Mylne from Hyderabad, Lower Sinde, 10 August 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 50, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/412, pp. 76-77.
[118] A. Nabi, 'Sindh in the Vortex of the Great Game,' *Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 70, No. 4,* (2017), pp. 80-81.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, p. 11.
[121] Ibid, p. 5.
[122] Ibid, pp. 489-490.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Digest of Intelligence from Hyderabad, Lower Sindh, by C.D. Mylne, 5 October 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 51, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/413, p. 595.
[125] Ibid, p. 596.
[126] S. David, *Victoria's Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 74.

turn, had his own ulterior motives. A devout Christian, he had prejudged the Amirs of Sind as untrustworthy and corrupt from the start.[127] Outram writes that he regarded Napier's initial mistakes as 'the natural blunders of a man suddenly invested with unlimited powers, among a people of whom he had neither knowledge nor experience, and impressed with the erroneous and sincere belief that the policy he pursued was, to use his own words, that on which the tranquillity of Scinde depended'.[128] All of this demonstrates the chaotic nature of the administration of the East India Company, in which a small group of men were able to simply carry out their own policies, up to and including war, without permission from the British Government or even the Court of Directors, the main policy-making organisation of the East India Company in London. Though Ellenborough was later removed from his position by the Court, the Sind remained in the Company's hands. Indeed, a letter in 1847 from the Undersecretary for the Government of India with the Governor-General to the Undersecretary for the Bombay Presidency, which the Sind would become part of, describes plans for how best to secure the Sind, which regiments would be sent to guard it, and hopes that their troops would only have to remain until the end of 1848 in order for their position in Sind to be secured.[129] This was written during the time of Ellenborough's successor, Henry Hardinge. Another such letter from the same year shows that the Company were arranging for the appointment of the next administrator of the Sind after Napier was gone, showing that they fully intended to remain in control of it for the long term.[130]

Immediately after arriving at his new assignment, Napier clashed with the more diplomatic Outram, who believed that the Sind's recent dissatisfaction had been caused by the heavy-handedness of the Company's own soldiers.[131] Despite the incredible one-sidedness of the treaty that Napier had been sent to get the Amirs to sign, he was still successful in getting them to sign it. Outram writes that the Amirs signed the treaty despite it being unjust in his opinion because they were being threatened by Napier and were afraid that he would invade if they did not sign.[132] Ellenborough wrote on 15 November 1842 that it was a necessity for the new treaty to be extremely harsh towards the Amirs because they had violated the terms of

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, p. 4.
[129] Letter from H. Edwards, Undersecretary to the Government of India with the Governor-General to the Undersecretary to the Government of Bombay, 20 October 1847, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 90, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/452, pp. 6-7.
[130] Letter from H.M. Elliot, Secretary for the Government of India with the Governor-General to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 25 August 1847, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 88, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/450, p. 468.
[131] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 75.
[132] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, p. 280.

their previous treaties with the Company, referring to the list of accusations Outram had presented to Napier.[133] However, Napier perceived the presence of a concentration of armed men near Hyderabad as a threat and attacked on 17 February 1843.[134] Outram claimed that correspondences between himself and Napier, which detailed that Napier had annexed Sind despite his knowledge that Outram was still negotiating, were left out of the official reports.[135] He further contends that according to Mylne, the officer at Hyderabad, the Amirs had no intention of making any aggressive moves toward Napier.[136] He contends that the soldiers that Napier saw as a threat were actually only there for the protection of the Amirs and were not planning to attack.[137]

At Miani, Mir Nasir Khan Talpur, one of the Amirs, was defeated by Napier. Due to the sudden nature of the attack, the Talpurs were forced to quickly mobilize their army and, as they did not have a standing army, were forced to use what volunteers they could gather from the surrounding area. A second army led by Mir Sher Muhammad Talpur failed to reach the battlefield in time to serve as reinforcements, while the Amir of Khairpur was successfully bribed by Napier. As a result, the Talpurs were only able to field a third of their military strength for this battle. The Company also had an overwhelming advantage in weaponry, and their troops were professionally trained, unlike their opponents. Napier's army crushed the Talpur army in the field and proceeded to take the fort of Hyderabad. A month later, the army of Mir Sher Muhammad arrived and attempted to reclaim the fort. This resulted in the Battle of Dubbo, which proved more challenging for Napier as Mir Sher Muhammed had entrenched his troops well. However, Napier managed to find a weak spot in his lines and break through, routing his army and solidifying the East India Company's control over the Sind. Though Ellenborough was not consulted before the annexation, he approved of it once he had learned of it. He wrote to the Queen on 21 March 1843, saying that the annexation should not be regretted, because it had allowed the Company 'practical command over the Lower Indus', the

[133] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1874), p. 73.
[134] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 75.
[135] M.A. Cook, *Annexation and the Unhappy Valley: The Historical Anthropology of Sindh's Colonization* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 230.
[136] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, pp. 98-101.
[137] Ibid, p. 280.

important natural defence that now became part of the Company's frontier with Afghanistan and the Punjab.[138]

However, criticism would arise back in Britain over this invasion, as the government did not approve of Napier's actions or the fact that they were sanctioned by Lord Ellenborough.[139] The Conservative MP for Woodstock, Lord Ashley, introduced a motion of censure into parliament, backed by Outram who alleged that Napier had intentionally started an unnecessary war, but it was promptly voted down.[140] In fact it was Outram, the one who had attempted to negotiate peace, who was removed from his position. Outram's book *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, was written in response to *The Conquest of Scinde*, a book written by Charles Napier's brother, General William Napier, which blamed Outram for the mistakes that led to the annexation.[141] Despite their displeasure, however, the Government made no effort to return Sind to the Talpurs, saying that doing so would be too difficult.[142]

Even among the Company itself, the reaction to the annexation was not particularly positive. The minutes for a meeting of the Court of Directors in August 1843 include a vote by the Court to send a letter to the Earl of Ripon, who earlier that year had become the President of the Board of Control, the British Government agency that oversaw the East India Company, arguing that the reports sent back from the Sind were incomplete and did not provide sufficient evidence that 'the proceedings adopted towards the Amirs have been consistent with sound policy, and with that character for justice and good faith, which they must ever feel anxious should distinguish the acts of the Indian Government'.[143] This Ripon was the father of the Lord Ripon who would later go on to become the Viceroy of India in 1880. The minutes of the 1843 meeting go on to state that this letter and a careful reading of the papers sent back from the Sind 'impressed on the Court the imperative duty of recording their conviction that the proceedings adopted towards the Amirs of Sind have been unjust and impolitic'.[144] At the time nothing came of this, with the minutes of the following meeting speaking of not wanting

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[138] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, pp. 70-71.
[139] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 78.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Outram, *Conquest of Scinde: A Commentary*, pp. 1-2.
[142] P. Moon, *The British Conquest and Dominion of India,* (London: Duckworth, 1989), p. 575.
[143] Secret Minutes of the Court of Directors, 29 August 1843, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, pp. 182-183.
[144] Ibid.

to embarrass the Indian Government and having deference for the Governor-General.[145] However, it was not long afterwards that the Court of Directors began speaking of removing Ellenborough from office, and it is possible that his approval of the Sind campaign was a factor in his dismissal.[146] Ellenborough himself certainly thought so, as he said in a letter to the Queen from 27 June 1843 that he feared he would not be able to continue in his position without the support of the Court of Directors over his Sind policy.[147] In a later letter from 22 January 1844, he confirmed that the Court had condemned the actions carried out in Sind.[148] Even though the Queen herself spoke out in strong opposition to Ellenborough's removal, and even though he was a favourite of Peel, they could do nothing to prevent the Court of Directors decision.[149]

It is also interesting that the Board of Control, the government overseers of the Company, declined to punish Ellenborough, while the Court of Directors removed him, though the Board did not do anything to support Ellenborough either. Ellenborough wrote to the Duke of Wellington, who at the time was the leader of the House of Lords, on 26 May 1844 expressing frustration that Ripon, the President of the Board of Control, was unwilling to do anything that would undermine the Court of Directors, and that Ellenborough had to contend with the whole influence of the Court alone with no support.[150] He again wrote that he believed his policy in Sind was the cause of his removal.[151] Despite the controversy surrounding him, Napier was able to remain longer, staying in his position as Governor of Sind until he was replaced in 1847, three years after Ellenborough's removal, claiming his need to return to Britain due to his family's ill health.[152] This was because Ellenborough's successor, Henry Hardinge, declined to punish Napier, who reported directly to him.[153] Napier returned to India in 1849 to participate

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[145] Secret Minutes of the Court of Directors, 6 September 1843, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, pp. 186-187.
[146] Secret Minutes of the Court of Directors, 9 April 1844, The British Library, IOR/L/P&S/1/2, p. 194.
[147] Lord Ellenbourough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, pp. 84-85.
[148] Ibid, pp. 111-112.
[149] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 78.
[150] Lord Ellenbourough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, pp. 440-441.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Letter from H.M. Elliot, Secretary for the Government of India with the Governor-General to the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, 25 August 1847, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 88, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/450, p. 466.
[153] Cook, *Annexation and the Unhappy Valley: The Historical Anthropology of Sindh's Colonization*, pp. 78-80.

in the Sikh Wars under the command of Lord Dalhousie, the next Governor-General after Hardinge, though he arrived too late to do so. After this, he was even appointed Commander in Chief by Dalhousie, though the two repeatedly clashed until Napier's death in 1853. Throughout all of this, the Sind remained in the Company's hands, and they would go on to annex the Punjab soon afterwards. Despite the removal of Ellenborough, it appears the Company's policies did not change.

In his own book, published after his death by his brother William, Napier, after noting a mutiny among sepoy battalions marching in the Punjab in 1849 during a time that Dalhousie was at sea and unable to respond, Napier actually predicts the Mutiny of 1857, stating that 'Mutiny with the sepoys is the most formidable danger menacing out Indian Empire'.[154] This smaller mutiny had been caused by an order affecting the soldiers' pay, and Napier had suspended that order to resolve the issue, without consulting Dalhousie.[155] By doing so he exceeded the authority of his position and was harshly reprimanded by Dalhousie upon his return, for which he held a grudge.[156] But despite his obvious animosity towards Dalhousie Napier brings up an important point in his defence of his actions. As he says, 'Mutiny had appeared, the Governor-General had disappeared, the matter was urgent, the Supreme Council fifteen hundred miles off, and no answer could be received from it in under a month.'[157] This was the problem facing all officers of the East India Company during this time. Britain was simply too far away and communications technology not yet advanced enough for orders to be relayed to and from India in a timely fashion, and so the Governor-Generals, or in this case an officer of the army, had no choice but to use their own discretion when it came to urgent matters. The Board of Control and Court of Directors were left to react to events after the fact, simply because they were not in India.

Returning to the matter of the Sind, J.W. Kaye, even as he defended Governor-General Hardinge for his own aggressive actions towards the Sikhs years later, still went out of his way to condemn Napier's actions.[158] This provides an interesting parallel between the East India Company and Russia in terms of their attitude towards invasions carried out without orders. While Napier was criticised for his invasion of the Sind, even though it was successful, because it made the Company look too warlike, the Tsar praised and rewarded General Mikhail

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[154] Napier, *Defects, Civil and Military, of the Indian Government ... Edited (with a supplementary chapter) by Sir. W. F. P. Napier*, p. 3.
[155] Ibid, pp. 2-4.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid, p. 3.
[158] J.W. Kaye, 'Cunningham's History of the Sikhs,' *The Calcutta Review, Volume 11, No.7* (1849), p. 548.

Cherniaev for his similar actions against the city of Tashkent in 1865. [159] In that instance, the Russian envoy, Gorchakov, insisted that the annexation had been done against the orders of the Tsar by a young officer looking to make a name for himself, but just as the East India Company had done, the Russians still kept the city for themselves.[160] Sind was not a particularly prosperous region, but as Ellenborough argued, it did contain a useful defensive barrier in the form of the River Indus.[161] Wellington agreed, writing to Ellenborough that the fortification of Sind and the Punjab were essential to the protection of the north-west frontier, and that if this were done, the frontier would be able to withstand any attack from Persia or Afghanistan in the west.[162] Suhail Zaheer Lari argued that the Company in Sind 'wanted to create a class loyal to them… who would have a stake in the land and, who would protect their interest on the western border of their empire which was threatened by invasion from the Russian empire.'[163] The annexation did leave the Punjab encircled, setting the stage for the much more successful annexation of the Punjab a few years later.

The failures in the annexation of the Sind were mostly political and reputational ones. The Company wanted to at least appear to be fair and just rulers, and Napier's actions jeopardised that perception. Of course, even though many condemned Napier's actions, the Company were not about to give the territory back now that they had it. This incident demonstrates the way in which the government's lack of control over the Company, and the Company's lack of control over its own officers, could be both a positive and a negative. The entire annexation had been decided by one man, without any input from either his superiors in the Company or the Government in Britain. Such a thing would not have happened under the Government of India after 1857, with their policy of 'masterly inactivity' and their closer ties with the British Government. 'Masterly inactivity' was the colloquial term at the time for Viceroy Lawrence's policy of not interfering in the affairs of other states, even as Russia annexed most of Central Asia.[164] His political rival and member of the Council of India, the chief advisors of the Secretary of State for India, Rawlinson, described the purpose of the policy to be that it ensured that Russia would always be seen as the aggressor in the region, as Lawrence believed that Russia planned to incite a repeat of the 1857 Mutiny, and that framing Russia as the

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[159] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 312.
[160] Ibid, p. 301.
[161] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, pp. 70-71.
[162] Ibid, p. 256.
[163] S. Z. Lari, *A History of Sindh,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 113.
[164] K. Meyer and S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India* (Berkely: Counterpoint, 1999), pp. 154-157.

aggressors would decrease the risk of this.[165] By contrast, the East India Company looked to expand its own frontier in order to strengthen it. William Napier sums up the beliefs of the Company well in his book about his brother's exploits in Sind. He states that as long as the Company had been present in India, it had been beset by 'barbarian' forces, and had no choice but to expand as 'peace cannot be until all is won'.[166] He says that this expansion has been particularly rapid towards the west because of the fear of the expansion of a rival power, Russia.[167]

The greater freedom that the Company provided was a double-edged sword, as while it had gained them new territory, it could easily have backfired if Napier's impulsive attack had failed. That being said, the Company believed that the Sind had been forging closer political ties with Persia, and therefore Russia.[168] Though Outram was not fully convinced that the intelligence he received about the Amirs conspiring with Persia was true, he believed it enough to pass it on to Napier, the man who actually carried out the annexation, and other officers such as Mylne also believed that the Amirs were plotting against the Company. Had Russia gained the same influence over the Sind as it had Persia that would have exposed a weak point in India's defences, especially after they added the Punjab to their territory just a few years later. A memorandum from 1875 on defence against the Russian advance, which had just taken Khokand, refers to Sind's position on the river Indus as a strong inner line of defence.[169] The Khanate of Khokand, which was comprised of parts of modern-day Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, was one of the Central Asian Khanates which occupied the territory between the British and Russian influenced regions of Asia, and its annexation by Russia was part of the reduction in distance between the two Empires which threatened the borders of India, in the view of the British. Charles Napier's brother William, a retired British officer and historian, argued that his brother's actions had strengthened India's frontier, saying that any invasion from the Afghans, Persians or Sikhs from the north or west, caused by the instigation of Russia, would have to take the fortified Sindhi cities of Hyderabad, Bukkur and Karachi, cross the river Indus, and then still have a desert between the invaders and India.[170] This was the

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[165] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[166] Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's conquest of Scinde,* p. 15.
[167] Ibid, p. 16.
[168] Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's conquest of Scinde,* p. 44.
[169] Memorandum from T.E. Gordon on the strategical effect of holding the Ishkaman Pass in Yassin, 2 November 1875, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 39 (Mar 1879), The National Archives, FO 65/1062, p. 350.
[170] W. Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's administration of Scinde, and campaign in the Cutchee Hills,* (London: C. Westerton, 1858), p. 67.

real benefit in the Great Game that the Company gained by annexing Sind, namely a more defensible frontier.

The continued existence of the Great Game during this time period can also be demonstrated by the East India Company's interaction with the Sikhs. The Sikhs were unaligned with either the British or Russian influenced parts of Asia, and controlled territory in the Punjab, having a strong military unaffiliated with either Britain or Russia. As a result, their presence on India's border was of great concern to the East India Company. The Sikhs legendary leader, Ranjit Singh, who had greatly expanded their territory, had died in 1839, and both Governor-General Lord Ellenborough and his successor, Sir Henry Hardinge, feared the power of the Sikh army, now unrestrained by Ranjit's strong leadership. Joseph Cunningham, an East India Company officer who produced the first complimentary history of the Sikhs written by an outsider, wrote that in 1837, the Russians pushing their intrigues through Persia and Turkestan forced the Company to mediate a truce between Ranjit Singh and Dost Mohammed, for fear that one of them would side with Russia.[171] This being the case again demonstrates that the Great Game had already begun prior to 1856, for if the Company were forced to make political alliances in Asia in response to Russia's own alliances, that must be considered evidence of a rivalry between the two in the region. In terms of the Great Game, the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh had been considered a potential ally, but also a potential rival, as Ranjit Singh also planned to expand his empire to Sind.[172] If they were to remain independent, they would form an even stronger buffer against Russia than Dost Mohammed did, as they had a much more powerful army. However, Ranjit Singh was not a full ally of the Company and was not fully trusted not to attack them, as William Napier noted, the annexation of Sind was just as useful in securing the frontier against the Sikhs as it was the Russians.[173] In fact, the Company's desire to maintain a good relationship with the Sikhs was one of the causes of the First Afghan War, as shown in the correspondence between William Macnaghten, Governor-General Auckland's Secretary and the future political agent to Afghanistan, and Claude Wade, diplomatic agent to the Punjab. In this correspondence, the two discuss how the tensions between Ranjit Singh and Dost Mohammed Khan, and the Company's favouritism towards Ranjit, were causing

[171] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*, pp. 217-218.
[172] Letter from C.M. Wade to W. Macnaghten, 7 April 1837, Secret Department, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Jan. to Aug. 1837, Vol. 46, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/127, p. 337.
[173] Napier, *The history of General Sir Charles Napier's administration of Scinde, and campaign in the Cutchee Hills,* p. 67.

Afghanistan to become more aligned with Russia.[174] Indeed, when one officer of the Government of India, Quartermaster-General R. Home, wrote a memorandum on the viability of a second war with Afghanistan, he specifically cited the lack of an independent Sikh state as an advantage that the Government of India had, that the Company had not.[175]

In 1837 the Company also negotiated with Ranjit Singh in order to ensure that he would not annex the Sind, just six years before they would do exactly that.[176] When they allied with Shah Shuja to invade Afghanistan, they wrote a treaty requiring Ranjit and Shuja to ally with each other, send each other gifts as signs of friendship, open their borders to each other's merchants, and give up all claims on another's territory.[177] As long as Ranjit Singh was in charge, the Company had been able to negotiate with him. However, his presence had caused problems for them. Indeed, it was in order to ally against him that Dost Mohammed had invited a Russian envoy into Afghanistan, causing the First Afghan War.[178] The Company initially, perhaps fearful of a repeat of Afghanistan, left the Punjab as an independent, neutral force, serving as a buffer against Russia. Sir Charles Gough, a soldier and later General who served under both the East India Company and Government of India, and fought in the Second Sikh War, the Mutiny of 1857 and the Second Afghan War, and brother of Sir Hugh Gough, the Commander in Chief during the First Sikh War, wrote that there was a fear in India of a Muslim uprising encouraged by the expectation of Russian support, and that the Sikhs under Ranjit Singh could be counted on to counter this possibility as they were anti-Muslim.[179] He also wrote that the Punjab could be counted on to check any Russian advance as long as Ranjit Singh was alive, but that the Company would have preferred to use Afghanistan as a buffer state.[180] However, after Ranjit Singh died in June 1839, his successors were not considered as reliable and the Company would later return to annex the Punjab completely. Sikh historian Karnail Singh argues that when Governor-General William Bentinck met with Ranjit Singh in 1831, he had already realised that his government would fall apart without him, and planned

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[174] Letter from Mr Secretary Macnaghten to Captain Wade, Political Agent at Loodiana, 15 May 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 40.
[175] Memorandum from R. Home Assistant Quarter-Master General, 10 October 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 224.
[176] Letter from C. M. Wade to W. Macnaghten, 7 April 1837, The Enclosures to Secret Letter No. 9, The British Library, IOR//L/PS/5/127, p. 338
[177] Tripartite Treaty signed by Lord Auckland, Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, sent by W. Macnaghten to Mr McNeil 26 July 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/1, pp. 50-51.
[178] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej,* p. 218.
[179] Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: The Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State*, p. 46
[180] Ibid.

to 'build supremacy over Punjab, Sind, Afghanistan, Turkestan and Khorasan up to the borders of Russia.'[181]

The First Sikh War took place between 1845 and 1846. It began after Ranjit Singh, ruler of the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab, died in 1839. He was succeeded by his son, Kharak Singh, but he was incredibly unpopular and was soon removed from power and replaced by his own son, Kanwar Nau Nihal Singh. However, both of them soon died in suspicious circumstances. Kharak Singh was believed to have been poisoned, the perpetrator being unknown, though his wazir (chief advisor), Dhian Singh, was suspected.[182] Nau Nihal Singh was killed by a large block of stone falling from a city gate, and again it was suspected that this was not an accident, though the circumstances of his death were confused and unclear.[183] This led to a power struggle, during which Ranjit Singh's widow Chand Kaur briefly took the throne before it was eventually won by the eldest surviving son of Ranjit Singh, Sher Singh. During this time, the Sikh army expanded rapidly, from 29 000 men in 1839 to over 80 000 in 1845, which made the East India Company nervous, as there was now a large Sikh army at the border with no clear leadership, and so they built up their own armies in response. However, in 1843 Sher Singh was murdered and his wife, Jind Kaur, became the regent for their infant son, Duleep Singh.

After yet another power struggle, Lal Singh became the Vizier, while Tej Singh became the commander of the army. In order to talk about the history of the Sikhs, it is necessary to first consult the work of Joseph Cunningham, and his book *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*. Cunningham was an East India Company Officer who fought in the First Sikh War himself. Of Lal and Tej Singh, Cunningham states that both felt that they were incapable of controlling their troops, but that the Sikh population believed that war was inevitable.[184] Nonetheless he does not have a high opinion of the two, referring to them as 'mercenary' and 'insidious'.[185] At this time, Lord Ellenborough was the Governor-General, though he was soon replaced by Sir Henry Hardinge. Both Governor-Generals increased their own military, heightening the tension between the Sikhs and the Company.

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[181] K. Singh, 'Anglo-Sikh Wars,' *Sikhism: Its Philosophy and History* (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1996), p. 565
[182] W. Dalrymple and A. Anand, *Kohinoor: The Story of the World's Most Infamous Diamond* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2016), p. 109.
[183] Ibid, p. 111.
[184] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej,* pp. 298-299.
[185] Ibid, p. 299.

Without Ranjit Singh as a uniting force, the Sikh Government had become far too unstable to serve as an effective buffer. To demonstrate the depths of this instability, consider that Ranjit Singh had been the Maharajah for 38 years. From his death until 1839 until the beginning of the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845, there were five different Maharajahs, all but one of whom were assassinated either during or after their reign. George Lawrence, who had been military secretary to the political agent William Macnaghten during the First Afghan War, and had been a political agent in the Punjab during the Second Anglo-Sikh War, wrote that after the death of Ranjit Singh, he received intelligence that the Sikhs were sending money to Dost Mohammed Khan to assist him in opposing the Company during the First Afghan War, and were also conspiring with the Amirs of Sind.[186] On 15 September 1841 Ellenborough wrote that the affairs of the Punjab were 'far from being in a satisfactory state'.[187] On 26 October of that year he wrote to the Duke of Wellington for advice on the best way to attack the Punjab, saying that it had become too divided since the death of Ranjit Singh and that he feared that the reinforcements travelling to Afghanistan to assist in the First Afghan War would be attacked.[188] On 30 March 1842, Wellington advised Ellenborough that the weakness of the Sikh Government made it necessary for the Company to reinforce its north-western frontier, as the Sikhs could no longer be relied upon to serve as a strong defence there.[189] Continuing, Wellington writes that if the Punjab and Sind were effectively fortified, the frontier would be able to withstand any attack from the west (the direction of Persia and Afghanistan), no matter how formidable.[190]

On 20 April 1843, Ellenborough expressed concern that, now that Dost Mohammed Khan was restored to the Amirship of Afghanistan, he and his son, Akbar Khan, could attack the Sikhs at the strategically significant district of Peshawar, which contained the Khyber Pass through which an invasion of India could be launched.[191] By 13 August, Ellenborough believed that Sher Singh's government was falling into disarray due to conflict between him and his wazir, Dhian Singh, and that this could lead to an attack on the Punjab.[192] Both Sher and Dhian Singh would

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[186] G. Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, (London: J. Murray, 1874), pp. 39-40.
[187] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, p. 20.
[188] Ibid, p. 178.
[189] Ibid, p. 252.
[190] Ibid, p. 256.
[191] Ibid, p. 93.
[192] Ibid, p. 113

be assassinated a month later. On 20 October, with Sher Singh dead and the Punjab in an even greater state of political disruption, Ellenborough wrote that it was in the Company's best interest for the Sikh Empire to be maintained in the state that it had been under Ranjit Singh, but that this was unlikely to happen.[193] He writes that 'the ultimate tendency of the late events at Lahore is, without any effort on our part, to bring the plains first, and at a somewhat later period the hills, under our direct protection or control'.[194] By 16 February 1844, he was concerned that Dost Mohammed would be able to successfully take Peshawar if he were to attack it.[195] This demonstrates that the Company were concerned about the vulnerability of the Sikh state to attack, and were willing to annex it to prevent that. But Ellenborough also expressed concern that the Sikh army, now leaderless and disorganised, could attack India itself, writing on 21 April 1844 that the successful mutiny of an army at the Company's frontier would be even more dangerous than an invasion at the behest of a hostile government, that the state of affairs in Punjab must be rectified, and that this was 'essential to the security of British power in India'.[196] However, Ellenborough would be removed from power before this could take place, and the First Sikh War would be fought by his successor, Henry Hardinge.

The tension between the Company and the Sikhs eventually spiralled into a war when Sir Hugh Gough, Commander in Chief of the Bengal Army, marched into Sikh territory in 1845. In Brian Bond's *Victorian Military Campaigns*, E.R. Crawford contributes a chapter on the Sikh Wars which argues that the Company started the war for a combination of concerns relating to strategic and political security due to the presence of a powerful state on India's border with no strong natural frontier between them.[197] The immediate cause of the war was the crossing of the Sutlej river of 50000 Sikh soldiers, which allowed Hardinge, to cite a breach of the 1809 treaty the Company had made with Ranjit Singh and declare war.[198] However, as the correspondence provided earlier in this chapter demonstrates, the Company had been preparing for a potential invasion of the Punjab for quite some time. Hardinge himself accompanied the army, though he placed himself below Gough in the chain of command. Hardinge was, in fact, the first Governor-General to not simultaneously hold the position of Commander-in-Chief of the army.[199]

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[193] Ibid, p. 116.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid, p. 132.
[196] Ibid, p. 142.
[197] B. Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1967), p. 33.
[198] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 85.
[199] Ibid*,* p. 79.

The Company easily won the first few battles, until the Battle of Mudki. At this battle, Gough's forces suffered heavy casualties due to his disorganised advance. Crawford argued that the cause of the casualties was Gough's rushed attack and misjudgement of the willingness of the Sikhs to fight back rather than retreat, due to his fear that the Sikhs would escape if he did not attack quickly.[200] However Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Ashburnham, who fought in the First Sikh War and was present for the battle, blames General John Littler for advancing too quickly, out of formation with the rest of the army, and using men who were already fatigued, noting that both Gough and Hardinge were furious about this.[201] This battle convinced Hardinge of Gough's unsuitability to command the army, leading to several strategy disagreements between them in the future. Gough's subordinate Sir Harry Smith also criticised him, arguing that if he had remained on the defensive, he could have lured the Sikhs out into the open and defeated them more easily.[202] This caused Hardinge to use his position as Governor-General to override Gough at the next battle at Ferozeshah, which took place only a day later. Because of this, when Gough wanted to attack immediately, Hardinge overruled him in order to wait until reinforcements from Major General Littler to arrive. David considered this fortunate for the Company, as without Littler they would have had equal numbers of troops to the Sikhs, but far less artillery.[203] Ashburnham writes that their ammunition was almost expended just as the Sikhs were beginning a third advance with fresh troops, and that they were incredibly lucky that a cavalry charge from the flank led by Hardinge dispersed the Sikh artillery at exactly that moment, even likening it to a miracle.[204] Hardinge again criticised Gough's head-on tactics and wanted him replaced, but it would be weeks before a change in in command could happen, again because of the vast distances involved in maintaining an Empire. By the time Hardinge's letter requesting a replacement reached Britain, the war was already over.[205]

Cunningham suggests that the prevailing opinion at the time was indeed that Gough was responsible for the heavy losses that the Company sustained in the war, but disagrees with this assessment, saying that, with the Governor-General in the field, only he could be held responsible for both victories and defeats.[206] However the modern historian Saul David disagrees, stating that though Hardinge was the highest ranking officer in the field, Gough was

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[200] Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 41.
[201] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 January 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), p. 68.
[202] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 92.
[203] Ibid*,* pp. 96-97.
[204] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 January 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), pp. 71-72.
[205] David, *Victoria's Wars,* pp. 104-105.
[206] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej,* p. 319.

still the commander and was only overruled by Hardinge occasionally, still being responsible for giving most of the orders. He criticises Gough's overreliance on brute force as well as the arguments between Hardinge and Gough as the reason for the heavy casualties.[207] Crawford also sees the clash between Gough and Harding as a problem and highlights the lack of communication between the East India Company's officers leading to tactical mistakes.[208] David contends that Gough's reckless tactics were the result of his experience fighting Asian armies in the past, and that this resulted in him not understanding that the Sikh army was far better trained and equipped than any Asian army that he had previously faced, such that these tactics would not work.[209] However, Sir Harry Smith then proceeded to win two straight battles against the Sikhs with few casualties. This complete victory revitalised the morale of the Company army while greatly damaging that of the Sikh army.[210] Ashburnham proclaimed, 'thank God!' upon learning of this.[211] The Company then proceeded to win a decisive battle at Sobraoon. After the Company's victory, the treaty of Lahore was signed, forcing the Sikhs to give up a large amount of territory. Though the still infant Duleep Singh remained as a figurehead, policy was now effectively set by the British Resident Sir Henry Lawrence.[212] Gough writes that the Governor-General was averse to annexing the Punjab as it would have required a protracted war of sieges, and instead planned to keep it as a strong buffer as it had been under Ranjit Singh, though this proved difficult as the new leader was very young.[213] However, Lieutenant-Colonel Ashburnham confided in a letter his suspicions that the Company would have to take possession of the country in two to three years' time.[214]

However, the possibility has been raised among historians, including E.R. Crawford and the East India Company officer, Joseph Cunningham, that the Company's victory in this war was actually the result of treachery by the two Sikh commanders, Lal Singh and Tej Singh. Before the battle Lal Singh had sent a messenger to company agent Captain Nicholson giving him details of his intentions and expressing his desire for friendship.[215] However, Saul David argues

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[207] David, *Victoria's Wars,* pp. 88-95.
[208] Bond, *Victorian Military Campaigns,* pp. 42-43.
[209] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 89.
[210] Bond, *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 46.
[211] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 January 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), p. 73.
[212] Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: The Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State*, p. 145.
[213] Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: The Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State*, pp. 144-145.
[214] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 25 February 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), p. 76.
[215] Bond, *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 39.

that this need not necessarily be a sign of treason, but rather that Lal Singh could have just been taking out an insurance policy in case of his defeat.[216] During the battle, Ashburnham noted that Lal Singh left, according to an order given by Nicholson order taking 14,000 cavalrymen, 12 battalions of foot soldiers and 20 artillery guns, just as the Company's army were encamping exhausted after a long march, which would have been the perfect time to attack.[217]

In the battle at Ferozeshah, after the Company were able to force Lal Singh's army from the field, Tej Singh's army arrived, and as the Company forces were exhausted and out of ammunition, it seemed that they could not possibly win. However, when Gough sent most of his cavalry to escort his horse artillery on an ammunition resupply, Tej Singh claimed that this must be a flanking manoeuvre and ordered his army to retreat, another highly suspicious action. Cunningham accused the two of having the intention of getting their own troops dispersed on purpose, in order to gain goodwill with the Company while also keeping up the appearance of devotion to their country.[218] Furthermore, Lal Singh, after leading his men in a charge, had immediately fled leaving them to fight alone.[219] Cunningham also points out that Lal Singh was known to be in communication with the British Agent Captain Nicolson, though he did not know the details of this communication due to Nicolson's death.[220] Likewise, he attributes Tej Singh's suspicious retreat to his desire to have the army dispersed, and argues that he could easily have won the battle if he had actually attempted to fight.[221] Still, the battle had been fierce, and at one point, Hardinge genuinely believed that he was going to lose.[222] Crawford argues that the two commanders were indeed traitors and that the Company would have lost the battle if not for them.[223] Finally at Sobraoon, Company forces were able to launch a flanking manoeuvre on the Sikh lines at a weak spot where their defences were made of soft sand, a weak spot supposedly leaked by Lal Singh. Meanwhile, Tej Singh once again left the battle early. Towards the end of the battle, the pontoon bridge that the Sikhs were using to cross the river broke, leaving nearly 20 000 Sikhs stranded. Sikh accounts claim that the bridge was sabotaged by Tej Singh, while British accounts claim that it broke simply because of the vast numbers of troops crossing it. Crawford sides with the Sikh accounts and suggests that Tej

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[216] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 85.
[217] Letter from Lieutenant Thomas Ashburnham to the Marquess of Sligo, 30 January 1846, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 11, No. 42 (1932), p. 67.
[218] Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej,* p. 304.
[219] Ibid*,* p. 306.
[220] Ibid*,* p. 304.
[221] Ibid*,* p. 309.
[222] Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 43.
[223] Ibid.

Singh did indeed purposely cut off his own army's retreat, leaving between 8000 and 10 000 of them slaughtered.[224] After the war, Hardinge, dissatisfied with Cunningham's depiction of him, commissioned his fellow East India Company Officer J.W. Kaye to write a response to Cunningham. Kaye attempts to dismiss the claims that Lal and Tej Singh's treachery resulted in the Company's victory, claiming that, while the two were treacherous, their actions worked against the Company, not for it. He claims that their true objective was to seem to be working for the Company while simultaneously doing as little as possible to help it, in order to earn their favour at the smallest possible cost to the Sikhs.[225] He claims that the two provided the Company with no information in any of the major battles, and that any information that they gathered was the work of their own spies.[226] Of course, Kaye here is writing on behalf of Hardinge to make his victory look legitimate, so his words should not be taken as objective fact.

The treaty that the Company signed with the Sikhs to end the war contained some benefits for their participation in the Great Game. Firstly, they gained the right to move troops through the Punjab, 'for the protection of the British territories or their allies' if necessary.[227] A division of the Company's soldiers was also left behind for the defence of the Punjab, and although the Punjab was not officially annexed, a British resident with unlimited authority over all foreign relations was established.[228] This strengthened their north-western frontier, the border with Afghanistan through which any invasion from Russia would come. When George Lawrence was placed in command of the Peshawar district, including the Khyber Pass which was on the border between the Punjab and Afghanistan, and was, according to Lawrence, a convenient connecting position between Afghanistan, Persia and India, Hardinge wrote to Lawrence calling it 'the foremost post in the Trans-Indus frontier' and 'the only vulnerable entrance into India'.[229] Lawrence also writes that he was granted more power and authority than the political agents in the other districts of the Punjab, who were directed to act only as advisors and not override the orders of the Sikh officials unless absolutely necessary, because of the political and military importance of Peshawar.[230] However, they had also lost the powerful Sikh state and army that could once be relied on to halt any Russian advance under Ranjit Singh's

[224] Ibid, p. 48.
[225] Kaye, 'Cunningham's History of the Sikhs,' p. 547.
[226] Ibid, p. 550.
[227] Treaty between the British Government and the State of Lahore, 9 March 1846, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/442, p. 64.
[228] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 227-228.
[229] Ibid, p. 239.
[230] Ibid, p. 229

command.[231] The Maharajah was a child, his army significantly weakened, and the new administration's position was very insecure, only able to be maintained through the Company's support.[232] In fact the Sikh Government specifically requested the Company's soldiers to be left behind for their protection.[233] As such the Company were now forced to defend this frontier themselves.

This state of affairs lasted only two years before the Second Sikh War broke out, lasting from 1848 to 1849. According to the Treaty of Lahore, the Company's occupation was to last only until 1854, though of course it is doubtful whether they did or did not intend to keep that promise. Two members of the Company, Patrick Vans Agnew and Lieutenant William Andersen, were murdered in the Sikh city of Multan on the 19th of April 1848, and soon after, the Sikhs again declared war on the Company. The British Political Agent Lieutenant Herbert Edwardes, who had been near Multan at the time, raised an army and clashed with the Sikh army in several minor clashes before laying siege to Multan. However, the Sikh forces that had been sent to reinforce him, led by Sher Singh, unsurprisingly defected, a situation that Edwardes had warned his superiors about.[234] In his journal, Lieutenant George Base, who fought in the Second Afghan War, notes that Gough had suggested a large force be gathered at Multan in preparation for a potential rebellion, but the British Resident at the Sikh court, Sir Frederick Curie, had argued that a smaller force would suffice if used in collaboration with the forces of Sher Singh, and this advice was accepted.[235]

By this time, Hardinge had been replaced as Governor-General by Lord Dalhousie, who, with the support of Gough, decided to wait to send any major forces of the Company to the Punjab until the monsoon season had ended. Crawford suggests that Dalhousie was intentionally provoking an uprising in order to give himself an excuse to annex the Punjab permanently.[236] David also concurs with this position, suggesting that the further the rebellion spread, the more Dalhousie would be able to justify annexing the entire Punjab, instead of just part of it.[237]

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[231] Gough and Innes, *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars: The Rise, Conquest, and Annexation of the Punjab State*, p. 46.
[232] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 226-227.
[233] Note of Conference between F. Currie, Esquire, Secretary for the Governor-General and Major Lawrence on the one part, and the Ministers and Chiefs of the Lahore Durbar on the other, 8 March 1846, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 80, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/442, p. 619.
[234] Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns*, pp. 52-54.
[235] Journal of Lieutenant G.A. Bace, 1844-1855, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 30, No. 122 (1952), p. 52.
[236] Ibid, p. 54.
[237] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 119.

The war would not begin in earnest until November 1848. By now, it had been decided that the Company would indeed annex the Punjab, using the excuse that they were 'restoring order.'[238] At that point, Gough led his army into the Battle of Ramnagar, where his reckless tactics once again caused him problems, and his attack was repelled. Like Hardinge before him, Dalhousie also expressed concern about Gough's tactics.[239] Unlike Hardinge, however, Dalhousie did not go to the battlefield himself, and so Gough now had complete command. At the beginning of 1849, Dost Mohammed, not long after being reinstated after the Company's defeat in the First Afghan War, pledged his tentative support to the Sikhs, hoping to reclaim his lost province, Peshawar, for which purpose he provided 5000 Afghan horsemen to the Sikh army.[240] Soon after Gough's army was ambushed at Chillianwala and once again suffered heavy casualties. David blames Gough's lack of reconnaissance and his determination to attack an army whose size and location he did not know for this incident.[241] Lieutenant Bace, who fought in the battle, noted that some regiments were completely disorganised and firing at random in panic.[242] Incredibly, Gough still saw this battle as a success, as he had repelled the attack despite massive casualties.[243] After this debacle, he was finally replaced as commander by Sir James Napier. However, as Napier would take weeks to arrive, Gough led his army to the Battle of Gujrat.

By this point, the Siege of Multan had been won and these troops were able to reinforce Gough, bringing with them significant artillery. Hopelessly outgunned, the Sikh army was easily defeated and surrendered. Their best soldiers had already been killed in the fighting either in the First Sikh War or the Second, and those who remained were undisciplined, their lines breaking quickly.[244] Lieutenant Bace, who was also present at this battle, writes of how quickly the Sikh army were made to retreat, calling it a complete victory.[245] He notes how, while pursuing the retreating Sikh army, they witnessed many deserters from it fleeing in the opposite direction each day.[246] The East India Company were again victorious and the Punjab was absorbed into their territory, with the Sikhs becoming part of their army. The Afghans,

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[238] Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 56.
[239] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 120.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Ibid*,* p. 126.
[242] Journal of Lieutenant G.A. Bace, 1844-1855, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 30, No. 122 (1952), p. 56.
[243] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 134.
[244] Ibid*,* p. 138.
[245] Journal of Lieutenant G.A. Bace, 1844-1855, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 30, No. 122 (1952), p. 61.
[246] Ibid, p. 63.

who had taken the opportunity to occupy Peshawar, fled back to their own territory and allowed the Company to retake it without a fight.[247] Crawford argues that, though the Sikhs were not handicapped in the second war by treacherous leaders as they had been in the first, they started it in a much worse position.[248] Weakened by the First Sikh War, the Sikhs had been forced to raise their new armies quickly, with little time to train the new troops. As a result, they were a much weaker force than the one that Hardinge and Gough had faced two years earlier. Though Gough's reckless tactics again almost led him to disaster, the overwhelming advantage in firepower of his army was enough to win him the day. On the subject of the autonomy of the East India Company, Dalhousie himself admitted that, while he had informed the British Government of his intention to annex the Punjab, they had given him no orders to do so.

When Ranjit Singh had been alive, the Sikhs were a strong neutral force in the region, which could not be counted on to side with the Company directly but would by their very presence on India's north-west frontier serve as a strong buffer, either against direct Russian attack or against a Persian or Afghan attack incited by Russia. With his death and the Punjab dissolving into internal power struggles, and their leader now being a child used as a figurehead by those who wanted to gain power, the state was heavily weakened and had already had four Maharajahs die in assassinations and military coups in the few years since Ranjit Singh's death. It could no longer be relied upon as a buffer state on the crucial north-west frontier.[249] With the Punjab annexed, the Company had significantly strengthened that frontier, as they could now occupy it with their own soldiers. Martyn Bailey suggests that the establishment of this new frontier, on the border of the Indus River, and the mountains of the north-west, created a sense of security which allowed the Government of India to be as passive as it became after the Mutiny.[250]

This expansion of territory is relevant to the Great Game in that it followed the policy of taking control of territory before the Russians could reach it, a policy favoured by the Company but cast aside by the Government of India. Viceroy Lytton subscribed to this point of view, pointing out that 'the territories of the Peshawar, Sind and the Punjab, successfully came under our

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[247] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 138.
[248] Bond (ed), *Victorian Military Campaigns*, p. 65.
[249] Lord Ellenborough and Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period*, p. 252.
[250] Bayly, 'Imperial ontological insecurity: Buffer States, International relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878', (2015).

rule; and by 1850 we had extended our dominion to the foot of the mountains beyond the Indus. Thus, during the first half of this century, the distance between the outposts of England and Russia had been reduced, almost entirely by advances on our side, from 2000 to less than 1000 miles.'[251] This is the very idea that is dismissed by historians such as Yapp and Hamm, and while they are correct that it was not the main priority of the Company, it remains true that the occupation of these territories did prevent Russia from gaining influence there. However, by doing so, the Company also increased the size of India's border with Afghanistan, making it an even more crucial strategic location. This also meant that, after 1857, when Russia began its own expansion into Central Asia, the borders between India's territory and Russia's became incredibly close, increasing the tension between the two. The Punjab in particular could have served as an excellent buffer between India and Russia, much like Afghanistan, if it had remained as strong as it had been under Ranjit Singh. However, the post-Ranjit Sikh Empire had too unstable a government to remain in this role.

Both the Sind and the Punjab serve as examples of the Company annexing territories to strengthen their own borders, allowing them to better defend India from the threat of invasion, whether it be a direct invasion from Russia, or an invasion incited by Russia from within their sphere of influence over Asian states such as Persia. These examples demonstrate that Sergeev's assertion that the Game did not begin until after the Crimean War cannot be accurate, as the correspondence of Company officials from this time period shows great concern from the Company that their north-western frontier would be attacked by Persian or Afghan forces incited by Russia and took significant measures to ensure that it is well defended. Furthermore, the mere suspicion that the Amirs of Sind were in communication with the Shah of Persia led to the region being annexed. Ingram's argument that the First Afghan War was an irrecoverable failure that ended the Great Game in 1842 is also challenged by these examples, as even after losing that war, the Company were able to strengthen their borders against attack and repel a Persian invasion of Herat, incited by Russia, in 1856. Furthermore, as the next chapter will explore, after the British Government took direct control over the Government of India after the 1857 Mutiny, they were able to acquire Afghanistan as a buffer state in 1880, succeeding where the Company had failed. As such, it cannot be the case that the First Afghan War ended the Great Game.

How the Great Game changed after 1857.

[251] Minute by the Viceroy, 4 September 1878, Confidential (3871.) Further Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, Nov 1877 - Dec 1878, The National Archives, FO 539/15, p. 130.

An aspect of the Great Game that has been largely ignored in the current historiography is the significance of the fact that, after the Mutiny of one-third of the Indian Army in 1857, the East India Company was replaced by a new government ruled directly by the British state. This section will explore the ways in which this change altered the course of the Great Game, and how the new Government of India differed in its approach to the Great Game from the East India Company.

The approach of the East India Company towards the Great Game can be understood as one of a typical imperial power. Despite its humble roots as a trading company, by 1838 the East India Company had grown into an imperial power in its own right and had over the course of the preceding decades conquered most of India. Lord Auckland, the Governor-General at the time, looked to continue this tradition and spread the influence of the Company further through its military and political power, with Afghanistan and Persia being his chief concerns. Henry Durand, an officer of the East India Company, reflected in his memoir on the First Afghan War that India had been in a state of profound peace before the appointment of Auckland due to a policy of non-interference that had been implemented, and harshly criticised Auckland for his sudden transition from one policy to its opposite.[252] Durand believed that rapid changes in policy such as these were the cause of the failure of the East India Company, as they undermined the Indians' confidence in its rule. Kaye also notes in his own book on Afghanistan that Auckland had been relatively unknown in India prior to his arrival, and also emphasises the peacefulness of India before Auckland's appointment, though he is far more complimentary of Auckland in general.[253] The East India Company's approach to the Great Game can be characterised by its participation in the First Afghan War, annexation of Sind and the Sikh Wars, all of which have been detailed in this chapter, demonstrating how it would militarily take control of territory in order to secure its border against the parts of Asia under Russia's sphere of influence. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, it can also be characterised by its use of Political Agents such as Arthur Conolly, Charles Stoddart, Alexander Burnes and D'Arcy Todd to attempt to gain influence and alliances with the Central Asian Khanates such as Bukhara and Khiva, which were located between the Russian and British spheres of influence.

Conversely, the Government of India took a much more diplomatic approach to the Great Game, and indeed only significantly participated in conflict once, through their participation in the Second Afghan War. The Government of India simply allowed Russia to gain major

[252] Durand, *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, pp. 32-33.
[253] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 167.

influence in the region through their expansions into Chimkent, Tashkent, Khokhand, Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, from 1864 to 1873. The invention of the telegram is a significant development here, as it allowed the British Government to quickly relay instructions to the officials of the Government of India, in a way they simply could not have done to the East India Company. This means that the members of the British Government in London had a much greater ability to stay informed on events in India and react more quickly to them, granting them more control over the Government of India than they had over the East India Company. This disparity in priorities between the Company and the Government of India could explain the current historiography surrounding the Great Game which tends not to separate the East India Company from the Government of India. However, even this laissez-faire approach had its limits, and the Government of India would still not accept Russian influence spreading to Afghanistan, its most crucial 'buffer state.' It is clear that both the Company and the Government of India prioritised Afghanistan over all of the other independent states surrounding India, but this is even more pronounced with the Government of India not attempting to prevent any of the other states from falling under Russian control. This demonstrates that, even under the more pacific Government of India, officials in India still took the possibility of a Russian invasion of India as a serious threat. There is simply no other reason for the Government of India to care about Afghanistan other than for defence, as it had no other resources that they required.

The Government of India was more cautious and less aggressive in external policy than the East India Company, which resulted in it allowing Russia to make several gains in Central Asia without opposition. The problems faced by the Government of India during this time period can be traced back to the Crimean War, which took place during the last few years of the East India Company. The Crimean War, which lasted from 1853 to 1856, extended far beyond the confines of Central Asia. The war began as a conflict between Russia and the Ottoman Empire over the rights of Christian minorities in the Holy Land, which Britain was pulled into, as it could not afford to allow Russia to gain more power by taking control of Ottoman territory. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire would have created a power imbalance in Europe which Britain (and France, which had also joined the war) could not allow. General Roberts, who would go on to become the Commander in Chief of the Indian Army under the Government of India, wrote of the political situation this caused. He cites a letter from the Governor-General at the time, Lord Dalhousie, to the Commissioner of Peshawar, Herbert Edwardes. In the letter, Dalhousie notes that the brewing conflict with Russia has made it expedient to consider an alliance with Dost Mohammed and Afghanistan, despite the recent war, though he and many

of his officers were doubtful and could not dismiss the idea that it was a mistake.[254] Though East India Company did not play a major role in the conflict itself, the war had a major impact on the political situation in India. Humiliated by their defeat, Russia would take decades to recover. However, this also caused Russia to undergo a period of rapid modernisation which would make it a more dangerous adversary in the future.

In order to recover from their defeat in the Crimean War, Russia underwent a period of modernisation which coincided with a push to colonise more of Central Asia. Russia went about this rather cautiously, with Prince Alexander Gorchakov, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, making sure to explain that Russia's motives were not to antagonize Britain, but rather to protect its own trade routes in the region. Nevertheless, they took control of most of Central Asia, getting closer and closer to India. This included annexing Chimkent in 1864, Tashkent in 1865, Khokhand and Bukhara in 1866, Samarkand in 1868 and Khiva in 1873. From this point on, Russian territory extended close to the borders of Afghan Turkestan, the region in northern Afghanistan, which was closest to these Central Asian territories, leaving Russian borders worryingly close for the Government of India. One example of the motivation behind this can be found in a report on a possible plan to invade India presented by General Alexander Duhamel, a member of the State Council of Russia, the Tsar's primary advisory body to Tsar Nicolas at the time of the Crimean War, which was later discovered by the Government of India. Duhamel claimed that 'From the year 1838-9 Russian influence in Asia has yielded to that of England', and that 'England combats Russian influence in every way, especially through its agents'.[255] This runs counter to what many historians of the Great Game have argued, especially Ingram's suggestion that the British lost the Great Game when they failed to annex Afghanistan in 1842.[256] However it should be noted that Duhamel may have been exaggerating in order to convince the Tsar to approve his invasion plan. Duhamel goes on to say that Russia had, so far, not attempted to interfere in British influence in Central Asia, but now that 'England has broken the peace of the world' in the Crimean War, Russia must 'lay her to the dust with one blow'.[257] While it is certainly untrue to say that Russia did not interfere at all in the East India Company's dealings in Central Asia, Russia did vastly increase its' operations there after the Crimean War, coinciding with the removal of the East India Company and the

[254] Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* p. 28.
[255] Historical summary of the Central Asian Question, India Office, 5 November 1873, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 58.
[256] Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' p. 167.
[257] Historical summary of the Central Asian Question, India Office, 5 November 1873, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 58.

government of India becoming administrated directly by the British Crown. Meanwhile, in Britain, opinions on Russia were becoming more mixed. In 1877, a memorandum from Sir Thomas Erskine Perry, a member of the Council of India, denounced the 'Russophobia' of the likes of Henry Rawlinson, his fellow Council of India member and Palmerston, after Rawlinson had released a proposal for the fortification of India's north-west frontier.[258] Perry contends that the idea that the borders of British and Russian territory must inevitably expand towards each other until they meet to be a false one, that Russia had no intentions of invading Afghanistan, and that Russia had already extended itself further into Central Asia than its interests demanded.[259] With the advent of the Indo-European Telegraph line in 1870, it became possible for the British Government to quickly relay its orders from London to Calcutta, through a line that passed through Russia. This meant that, while the Governor-Generals had mostly free reign to decide Indian policy under the East India Company, the Viceroys of the Government of India now had less direct control.

The Government of India's participation in the Great Game would be much more restrained. In his memoirs, Roberts brings up a letter from Henry Rawlinson written in 1868, in which he pointed out the steady advancement of Russia towards Afghanistan and argued that Russia's occupation of Bukhara, which was part of their expansion into Central Asia which brought the Russian Empire's borders closer to the borders of British India would give them a pretext for interfering in Afghan politics. Rawlinson argued that the Government of India's policy of caution would allow Russia to reach Afghanistan unopposed, and that it would soon be necessary to ally with Sher Ali Khan, as they once had with Dost Mohammed.[260] Once again, Afghanistan is shown to be the Government of India's top priority, just as it had been for the East India Company. In this case, the other nations conquered by Russia seem to only be a concern for Rawlinson regarding their effects on the defence of Afghanistan. Roberts also reported that, once the offer of an alliance was made, the Amir's minister Saiyad Nur Mohammed, had said that the day might come when the Russians would arrive, and that if that were to happen, Afghanistan would need British support.[261] This indicates that Afghanistan was also concerned about the spread of Russian influence in the region, just as the Government of India were.

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[258] Memorandum from Sir E. Perry, 1 August 1877, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 187.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* p. 306.
[261] Ibid*,* p. 308.

Roberts further relates an incident in 1873 when the Government of India negotiated with Russia regarding Afghanistan's northern border. The Russians had agreed to accept the current borders of Afghanistan, while the Government of India had agreed to support the Afghans militarily in the case of a Russian invasion. Interestingly, it appears that by this point the Government of India's fear of Russia had subsided, while Sher Ali's had not, such that he had to be reassured that the British Government did not believe Russia would ever invade Afghanistan.[262] Furthermore, at this same conference, the Russian envoy, Prince Gorchakov, had agreed that he had no objection to British agents operating in Afghanistan, and that Russian agents would not operate there.[263] Lord Northbrook, the Viceroy of India at the time, wrote to Sher Ali Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, that he believed these assurances were made to demonstrate to the British that Russia saw Afghanistan as outside its sphere of influence and did not intend to extend their borders any further south.[264] In the letter, Northbrook was convinced that there would be no threat to the borders of Afghanistan from Russia, and would that he planned to maintain the policy of his predecessors Lords Lawrence and Mayo.[265] However, Russia's borders would continue to extend further southwards, so Gorchakov does not seem to have been sincere.

Later in 1873, in a history of the 'Central Asian Question' presented to the India Office by Owen Tudor Burne, private secretary to Northbrook's predecessor, Lord Mayo, a full transcript of the plan to invade India suggested to Tsar Nicholas by General Duhamel was mentioned. This plan included discussion of the best route to take for the invasion and whether to attack through Afghanistan or Persia, the two areas that had been most troubling during the East India Company's defence of India.[266] Rawlinson wrote that 'if the present status in Central Asia could be maintained, I should be very loth to recommend any movement on our part to disturb it', but believed it would be impossible to maintain the current status quo.[267] Specifically, he feared that the weakening of Persia, it's continued drift towards Russia, the advance of the Russian military towards India, and the increasing unrest in Afghanistan would inevitably force the Government of India to take action.[268]

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[262] Ibid, pp. 321-322.
[263] Ibid, p. 323.
[264] Letter from the Viceroy and Governor General of India to Amir Sher Ali Khan, 6 September 1873, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia. 1873-74, The National Archives, FO 539/11, p. 138
[265] Ibid.
[266] Historical summary of the Central Asian Question by Owen Tudor Burne, India Office, 5 November 1873, The British Library, IOR/C/137, pp. 57-58.
[267] Memorandum by H.C. Rawlinson on the Central Asia Question, 22 May 1874, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 11.
[268] Ibid.

Though the Russian advance was concerning to the Government of India, they were still not willing to make a move. In a letter to Kaye written in 1874, Sir Bartle Frere, a member of the Council of India, explains this point of view. He relates that the policy of 'masterly inactivity' which had been the Government of India's policy until this point had begun to be abandoned, but that no-one could agree what to do; whether to focus on flooding Turkestan with British influence, to advance their own borders to counter Russia's advance, or to consider any further advance by Russia a cause for war.[269] Frere believed that were the Russians to invade Merv, their latest target, this should not be used as *casus belli* to go to war. Merv was in modern day Turkmenistan, near the border of both Persia and Afghanistan, and its annexation by Russia would therefore bring their borders dangerously close to Afghanistan. He argued that threatening to go to war would not prevent the Russian advance, but instead only delay it, as he believed that expansion and conquest were the inevitable outcome when a powerful and fervently Christian country like Russia is placed next to several weaker and non-Christian nations, likening this to the Crusades.[270] He maintained that the true nature of the Russian threat was not that they would invade, but that their influence would turn the people of countries like Afghanistan against the Government of India.[271]

On the same issue, Rawlinson suggested that in response to a Russian occupation of Merv, the Government of India would have no choice but to place a garrison in Herat, with or without the blessing of the Afghan Amir.[272] However, he agreed with Frere that it was not a good reason to go to war. In response to Frere's letter, a memorandum was placed before the leadership of the Government of India by the former Viceroy, Lord Lawrence, which agreed with Frere's assessment that the Government of India should not go to war despite the dangers posed by Russia's continuing advance.[273] However, he disagreed with Frere's conclusion that there was a significant desire to abandon 'masterly inactivity' among the officials of the Government of India. Instead, he claims that military men like Frere were too quick to suggest 'forward' policies, and that the Government of India's current policy was the best way to avoid more disasters like that of the First Afghan War.[274] Frere would respond expressing his fear that, should the Government of India not react in some way to Russia,

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[269] Letter from Sir Bartle Frere to John Kaye, 12 June 1874, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 1.
[270] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[271] Ibid, p. 7.
[272] Memorandum by H.C. Rawlinson on the Central Asia Question, 22 May 1874, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 12.
[273] Memorandum by Lawrence on the Central Asian Question, 4 November 1874, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 8.
[274] Ibid, pp. 8-9.

Russian influence would soon spread to Afghanistan. He goes on to say, 'we do not covet territory in Afghanistan, any more than on the continent of Europe, but it does not suit us that our weaker neighbours be swallowed up by the stronger military powers'.[275] The letter and the debate surrounding it demonstrate a key difference between the East India Company and the Government of India. While the East India Company's main priority in the Great Game was to prevent the expansion of Russian influence and territory, it was still interested in expanding its own borders, and saw doing so as a method of preventing Russia from doing the same. The Government of India, however, did not follow this approach, due to their belief that making Russia appear to be the aggressor in the region would prevent them from inciting a mutiny among their Indian soldiers.[276]

By 1876, the Government of India was again becoming dissatisfied with their passive approach to Russia. Frere wrote to Lord Salisbury, at the time the Secretary of State for India, concerned that the Government of India's agents on the frontier did not know much of Afghan Persian and Russian affairs.[277] He stated that having asked these agents why they had not tried to gather information about movements of foreign powers beyond the frontier, each of them responded that to do so would go against Government of India policies.[278] Frere expresses concern that the standing order for all but the highest ranking frontier officers was to ignore all that went on beyond the frontier.[279] Robert Montgomery, the former Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, responded in a memorandum that he did not believe the Government of India was ignorant to the movements of Russia and the affairs of Central Asia.[280] By this time, Lytton had become the new Viceroy. In 1877, Rawlinson, seeing that Afghanistan was now the only remaining buffer state between India and Russia, wrote a memorandum suggesting that it was now necessary to begin intervening in the affairs of Afghanistan once again, and that the Company's retreat from the First Afghan War had been a mistake borne of panic.[281] In 1878, General G. I. Wolseley, a member of the Council of India and veteran of the Crimean War and 1857 Mutiny, wrote a battle strategy in a memorandum in case of war against Russia, as war

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[275] Ibid.
[276] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[277] Letter from B. Frere to Lord Salisbury, 3 March 1876, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1759-1876, The British Library, IOR/C/139, p. 79.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Memorandum from R. Montgomery, 15 May 1876, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1759-1876, The British Library, IOR/C/139, p. 82.
[281] Memorandum from H. Rawlinson, 28 July 1877, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 186.

between Britain and Russia had 'now become a possible contingency'.[282] In his memoirs about his time in India, Lord Roberts explains that the Government of India were now in an altered position in India due to the advance of Russia into the region, noting that most of the British Government had not yet realised the possibility that they and Russia would be close enough to each other in Asia to come to blows. However, he does not blame Russia for this, considering their advance into Asia to be a natural outcome of the contact between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism.'[283]

In the preface to his account of his own mission to Khiva during the time of the East India Company, Abbott writes of the Russian conquest of Khiva, pointing out that Russia had marched 1500 miles towards India in just twenty-five years.[284] James Abbott, who in 1839 had negotiated on behalf of the East India Company to prevent a Russian invasion of Khiva, believed that the expansion of Russian territory had been allowed because of disunity among the British, blaming 'party spirit'.[285] Even though they were reluctant to act, the Government of India were still concerned about the advance of Russia, as shown by a memorandum tracing the progress of Russia in Central Asia. This included a report on Prince Gorchakov of Russia's declaration in 1875 that Russia did not intend to extend its borders beyond that which it currently held, and that Afghanistan in particular would remain neutral.[286] The memorandum goes on to say that 'each successive advance of the Russian frontier towards Afghanistan involved complications which it was equally the interest of both England and Russia to avoid'.[287]

Surprisingly, however, in the midst of the Second Afghan War, before Abdur Rahman had emerged as the ideal candidate to appoint to the Amirship, the Government of India had seriously considered allowing Persia to take Herat, as long as the rest of Afghanistan was left alone.[288] This again demonstrates the cautious and compromising nature of the Government of

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[282] Memorandum from G.I. Wolseley, 30 March 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 15.
[283] Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* p. x.
[284] Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, p. xi.
[285] Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, p. xii.
[286] Memorandum by O.T.B. on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 182.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Letter from Lytton, F. P. Haines, A. J. Arbuthnot, A. Clarke, J. Strachey, B. B. Johnson, W. Stokes, and A. R. Thornton to Viscount Cranbrook (Secretary of State for India), 7 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/2, p. 2.

India in comparison to the Company. Whereas the Company were determined to keep Persia out of Afghanistan entirely, the Government of India were willing to lose parts of it to save the rest. At around the same time, a letter from Louis Mallet (sometimes misspelled as Mullet or Mulet in official documents), the Under-Secretary of State for India, reached the Marquis of Salisbury suggesting that Afghan agents of the Government of India should be sent to Afghanistan in order to spread the message that only Britain could protect the Muslim religion, while also reporting that he had received information that Russia had formed a secret alliance with Turkey.[289] This is an indication of the very type of espionage that historians such as Yapp would deny the existence of, though it does not prove that it was in any way widespread. It does, however, demonstrate that the Government of India were attempting to stamp out Russian influence in Afghanistan by presenting themselves as the more religiously tolerant group. Another letter on the same subject from Austen Henry Layard, Ambassador to Constantinople, further addresses the subject of Turkey, stating that there was a widespread desire among Arabs under Turkish control to be free of the Ottoman Empire if they could depend on British support.[290] The same letter, however, rejects the claims of an alliance between Russia and Turkey, pointing out that the Sultan of Turkey was very anti-Russian, but might be persuaded to ally with Russia if he believed that the British were plotting against him.[291]

The question of whether the Government of India's unwillingness to prevent the spread of Russian influence in Central Asia during this time should be considered a failure is an interesting one. On the one hand, if the Great Game is to be defined as the British attempt to prevent the spread of Russian influence in Central Asia, then the Government of India clearly did not do so, as the borders of the Russian Empire were extended from about 1500 miles away from India to only 300 miles away by 1873.[292] Despite this, important officials in the Government such as Governor-General Northbrook continued to believe assurances that Russia did not plan to expand any further, only for them to do so.[293] Bartle Frere's frustration that the Government of India seemed uninterested in anything happening outside its borders

[289] Letter from Mr Mulet (sic) to the Marquis of Salisbury, 8 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/3, p. 1.
[290] Letter from A.H. Layard to the Marquis of Salisbury, 19 February 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/10, p. 1.
[291] Ibid, p. 2.
[292] Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 83.
[293] Letter from the Viceroy of India to Amir Sher Ali Khan, 6 September 1873, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1873-74, The National Archives, FO 539/11, p. 138.

is understandable.[294] That being said, the Government of India's objectives need to be considered. The Government were not merely ignoring the Russian advance, but rather carrying out their own policy, to ensure that Russia would always be seen as the aggressor by the nations surrounding India, and also forcing Russia to expend soldiers and supplies to conquer and then maintain their power in Central Asia.[295] As the Council of India member Rawlinson wrote, the Government of India were concerned about the possibility of another mutiny, or that Afghanistan or Persia would be incited to rise against them, more than they were with a direct Russian invasion of India.[296] After all, any invasion from Russia would need to pass through Afghanistan in order to reach India. However, by allowing the Russians to continue to capture territory and move their borders closer and closer to Afghanistan and India, the Government of India made Afghanistan and India more difficult to protect during the Second Afghan War, as will be expanded upon in the next chapter. For the East India Company, Persia, backed by Russia, had been the biggest threat with regards to an actual direct invasion of Afghanistan. Russia itself had been far enough away that political interference in the country was far more likely than an actual invasion. However, by the Second Afghan War, this would no longer be true, as the Panjdeh Incident would later prove.

Though it falls outside the confines of the time period of this thesis, the Panjdeh Incident was a direct consequence of the Government of India's actions during the 1870s and particularly the Second Afghan War and should therefore still be addressed here. The incident, in which Russia invaded and captured a border fort in Afghanistan in 1885, almost led to armed conflict between the Government of India and Russia, but the matter was ultimately settled diplomatically. This was possible in part because of the Government of India's appointment of Abdur Rahman Khan to the Amirship, and the negotiations led to a stabilisation of the border between Russian territory and Afghanistan, and an easing of the tensions between Russia and Britain. However, by failing to uphold the Treaty of Gandamak, which required them to assist Afghanistan militarily in the event of invasion, the Government of India left Abdur Rahman Khan believing that he could not rely on them in the face of Russian aggression.[297] At the time, there were fears that Abdur Rahman could have been bought by the Russians, but these were

[294] Letter from B. Frere to Lord Salisbury, 3 March 1876, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1759-1876, The British Library, IOR/C/139, p. 79.
[295] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Extract from letter from Lord Dufferin to the Cabinet Office, 30 July 1885, The National Archives, CAB 37/16/46, p. 1.

dismissed as unlikely by Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy at the time.[298] This is an extremely significant event, as it is an actual, albeit minor, Russian invasion of Afghanistan that was successfully repelled through diplomacy, proof that the Government of India's approach to keeping Russia out of Afghanistan had been successful. While Yapp argues that the Panjdeh incident was over British prestige, not the defence of Afghanistan, and that Britain never intended to actually go to war over it, even he admits that the British would have gone to war if Russia had continued its invasion and attacked Herat.[299] Yapp argues that the true intention of the British was to make a strong showing of standing firm over the Afghan border for the public and the press while simultaneously encouraging Russia to negotiate, but this was a legitimate and successful strategy which did ensure that Russia encroached no further on Afghan territory.[300] Though Yapp seems to see this as a refutation of the idea of the Great Game, this incident demonstrates that Russia did plan to invade Afghanistan, and that the Government of India's strategy was able to repel that invasion.

The question remains, then, which of the two organisations was more successful at playing the Game? On the one hand, the East India Company's failure in the First Afghan War was a major setback that left their most important buffer state severely vulnerable. In addition to this, several of their most important political officers such as Macnaghten, Burnes, Conolly and Stoddart ended up being killed by the people of the nations surrounding India due to failures in diplomacy. On the other hand, though the Company did suffer some major failures during this time period, they did manage to expand their influence to the Sind and the Punjab, increasing the security of the north-western frontier through which any attack would need to come, and more importantly, Russian influence in Central Asia did not significantly expand during their rule. The Russians' major stronghold in Asia during this time was Persia, which was successfully repelled twice by the East India Company. Conversely, the Government of India did not prevent Russia influence from spreading through Central Asia greatly expanding Russia's sphere of influence in Asia. However, the Government of India did manage to cut off the spread of Russian influence when it truly mattered, during the Second Afghan War. As the next chapter will explore, from the standpoint of the Great Game, the Second Afghan War was an incredible success for the Government of India, a stark contrast to the unmitigated disaster that the First Afghan War had been for the Company. The Government of India got essentially everything they had wanted out of the Second Afghan War, namely a strong Afghan

[298] Ibid.
[299] Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' p. 657.
[300] Ibid.

government free of Russian influence that would serve as a buffer to prevent Russian influence from spreading to India. That their own influence in Afghanistan was limited only to controlling its foreign policy is unimportant, as preventing the spread of Russian influence was always a more important aspect of the Great Game than spreading their own influence, to both the East India Company and the Government of India. The success of this strategy for the Government of India can be demonstrated through the Panjdeh Incident of 1885.

The Government of India's victory in the Second Afghan War also casts doubt on Ingram's assertion that the Great Game became unwinnable for the British in 1842. If, as Ingram states, making Afghanistan into a client state was an essential step towards victory in the Great Game, then the Government of India having done so, would surely indicate that they were not out of the Game yet. Indeed, if it is considered that the ultimate objective of the Game was to defend India from the threat of Russia by creating buffer states to limit Russian influence in Central Asia, then the Government of India succeeded in that goal, as they maintained control of India for decades longer, and its eventual loss had nothing to do with Russia. If Ingram's belief that the goal of the British in India was to impose their influence on all of Central Asia is taken as accurate, then they could indeed be said to have failed, but the evidence indicates that this was a secondary goal at best. In the end, the question of which of the two organisations was more successful in the Great Game depends on how much significance is placed on the role of Afghanistan in the defence of India. The East India Company suffered a devastating defeat in Afghanistan and utterly failed in its objectives there, but successfully defended against Russia in other areas and even expanded their influence somewhat. On the other hand, the Government of India were completely unable and unwilling to prevent the spread of Russian influence everywhere, but in Afghanistan itself, they had a major success and essentially accomplished everything the East India Company had failed to achieve years before.

Whichever of these stances is taken, it cannot be denied that British participation in the Great Game changed substantially after the East India Company was replaced by direct British rule. The policy of 'masterly inactivity' would never have been enacted under the Governor-Generals of the East India Company, which regularly interfered in the affairs of Asian states in service of fortifying India further against Russia, such as their military interventions in Afghanistan, Sind, and the Punjab, resisting Persian attempts to annex Herat, and the Company's political and diplomatic missions to Khiva and Bukhara. The Government of India, on the other hand, despite numerous examples of its officials worrying about Russia's rapid expansion through Central Asia, they kept to their policy of non-interference until Lytton became Viceroy and brought his 'forward' policies into effect. Even under Lytton, the Government of India did not use military force to intervene in the Game until the Second

Afghan War, when their most important ‘buffer’ was threatened. Perhaps ironically, the Government of India’s lesser participation in the Game resulted in a more secure position by the end of 1880, with a strong, independent Afghanistan protecting India’s border, and a better relationship with Persia, which was not as closely allied with Russia as it had been during the East India Company’s time, as will be expanded upon in the dedicated chapter on Persia. The Central Asian states such as Khiva and Bukhara that were lost to Russia had never been crucial to either governments’ Great Game strategy, having only served as additional territory that Russia would need to expend resources to cross before reaching India. As long as Afghanistan remained secure, so too would India.

Chapter Two: Comparing the Afghan Wars

The British fear of Russian invasion of India is perhaps best demonstrated by their handling of the nation of Afghanistan. Afghanistan occupied a strategic location between Russia and India and could easily be used as a staging ground for either an invasion of Russia from India, or vice versa. As such, either forming an alliance with or taking over the government of Afghanistan became an important priority for both the British and the Russians during this time period. Because of this, a series of Afghan Wars broke out during this time, the first two of which fall within the time period of this thesis. The First Afghan War, which took place between 1839 and 1842, was fought between the East India Company and the Emirate of Afghanistan, which began as a succession dispute between Amir Dost Mohammed and former Amir Shah Shuja. The Second Afghan War took place between 1878 and 1880 and was fought between the Indian Government, which was administrated directly by the British Government, and the Emirate of Afghanistan, at this time led by Sher Ali Khan, the son of Dost Mohammed. These wars provide an excellent opportunity to compare the effectiveness of the East India Company and Government of India as they each faced very similar problems in their respective wars. Both wars began with an easy victory for the British and Indian forces in a pitched battle before the war progressed into a series of hit and run attacks by the Afghan forces combined with riots by Afghan civilians while the British struggled to maintain control over Afghanistan. By directly comparing these, we can determine to what extent the Government of India after 1857 learned from the mistakes of the East India Company when dealing with Afghanistan.

These differing approaches towards the First and Second Afghan War encapsulate the differences between the East India Company and the Government of India better than any other aspect of the Great Game. They provide an opportunity to observe how the two governments reacted to very similar circumstances and compare the results. Though both were able to win conventional military battles against the Afghan army, their plans for how to control the country afterwards were very different and led to differing results. This chapter will argue that the East India Company, typical of its operation during this time period, opted to use their chosen Amir Shah Shuja Durrani, as a puppet ruler, using their own troops to keep the people of Afghanistan in line. However, this was a failure because the Afghans could not accept being ruled by outsiders, and the Company could not afford to keep the number of soldiers required to prevent rebellion in Afghanistan indefinitely. When the Company suffered a massive defeat in the destruction of Elphinstone's army during its retreat from Kabul, they left Afghanistan after inflicting some reprisals and rescuing prisoners. On the other hand, the Government of India, after briefly attempting to maintain a similar puppet Amirship with Yakub Khan, decided to make a deal with Abdur Rahman Khan, who would rule Afghanistan

almost entirely independently, with the Government of India only determining Afghan foreign policy but having no say in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. This achieved the Government's actual objective, to remove Russian influence from Afghanistan, and did so without needing to use their own soldiers or resources. It also neatly avoided the problem of the Afghans refusing to be ruled by outsiders, as Abdur Rahman ruled without visible British influence.

These differences are emblematic of the differences in the overall strategies of the East India Company and Government of India in the Great Game and provide an excellent example of how the Government of India's less forceful and more subtle approach was actually more effective in the defence of India in the long term. Afghanistan was the most important 'buffer state' for India due to its strategic location and maintaining it as a buffer was the most important aspect of both the East India Company and Government of India's strategy in the Game. While the East India Company failed to maintain this buffer and made an enemy of Afghanistan due to its overreliance on direct control of territory, the Government of India achieved the same objective by placing a reliable ally in control. This can also be seen in the Government of India's more positive relationship with Persia, which will be covered in the next chapter. This chapter will compare the policies of the two governments regarding Afghanistan starting with the causes of and political situation immediately preceding each war. It will then compare their actions at each stage of their respective wars, both of which consisted of an initial military conflict in which the Indian Army overwhelmed the Afghans and took control of the country, followed by a period of relative but uneasy peace leading to a rebellion by the Afghans, and then a final military conflict to end each war. It will then analyse the aftermath and consequences of each war and their effects on the wider Great Game. Its purpose is to use the Afghan Wars as an example to demonstrate the ways in which the East India Company's method of defending India by expanding into other Asian nations in order to prevent Russia from doing the same, could backfire by alienating the nations around them, while the Government of India, after initially facing similar problems, opted to create an almost independent Afghanistan that they would interfere with as little as was necessary to keep Russia out. This relates to the rest of the Great Game as it demonstrates how, by not trying to exert too much control over the rest of Asia, the Government of India were actually able to defend India more effectively than the East India Company.

The Historiography of the Afghan Wars

Firstly, although the wider historiography of the Great Game has already been covered in the introduction, it is important to address the debates specifically surrounding the Afghan Wars. In Gregory Fremont-Barnes' analysis of the Afghan Wars, he argues that they should be understood as part of the long series of colonial wars fought around the world throughout

every year of Queen Victoria's reign.[1] He agrees with most of the historiography that the main motivation for the invasion of Afghanistan in both the First and Second Afghan War was the fear of Russian expansion, and further argues that the Afghan Wars stand out from the other wars the British Empire engaged in due to the fact that they were military victories but political failures, leaving the British with nothing that could not have been gained through diplomacy alone. Fremont-Barnes is possibly the historian who comes the closest to making a direct comparison between the East India Company and Government of India's approaches to Russian expansion as he does make comparisons between the First and Second Afghan Wars, but he still refers to both organisations simply as 'the British' and conflates them. In fact, at the very beginning of the 2014 edition of his book, there is a note from the publisher informing the reader that they should be aware that the armies in Afghanistan were commanded jointly by the East India Company and the British Government before 1858, and then solely by the British Government afterwards, because they clearly felt that Freemont-Barnes did not make this fact sufficiently clear in the book.[2]

This is especially important on the topic of the Afghan Wars as, even though both organisations were reporting to the British Government at home, the distances involved meant that, especially during a war when decisions had to be made quickly and situations were constantly shifting, the members of the organisations actually in India had to make decisions for themselves most of the time. This chapter will explore the consequences of some of these decisions and the differences in the leadership of the East India Company and Government of India and will also challenge the notion that the Second Afghan War, at least, was a 'political failure.' While the Government of India did not achieve all of its objectives during the Second Afghan War, it did, in stark contrast to the East India Company in the First Afghan War, achieve its primary political goal, the creation of a strong 'buffer state' in Afghanistan to serve as a first line of defence against Russian expansion. The East India Company, on the other hand, did suffer a complete political disaster due to the First Afghan War. This is primarily due to a failure in leadership, with vague and unclear orders being commonplace, and officers being promoted to roles they were not suited for, with disastrous results. Before the war had even begun, the Company's efforts to form an alliance with Dost Mohammed had already failed due to the unclear orders of William Macnaghten, who would be the First Political Officer of the East India Company for the duration of the occupation of Afghanistan, and the inexperience of Alexander Burnes, who would be the Second Political Officer. Had the East India Company

[1] G. Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009)*,* p. 8.
[2] Ibid*,* p. 4.

negotiated more effectively, they may have been able to acquire Afghanistan as an ally without even needing to go to war.

In terms of the Afghan Wars' place in the wider historiography of the Great Game, Edward Ingram's concept of the Great Game is centred on the First Afghan War, which he believes resulted an unrecoverable defeat for the British, due to their failure to acquire the most important buffer state, Afghanistan.[3] He argues that the First Afghan War and Crimean War were proof that the British could not defend India militarily, and that this meant that they would have to take over Central Asia economically.[4] He argues that it was essential for Britain's victory in the Game that Persia be made to give up its claim to Herat, and that to do so, 'would depend on the transformation of Afghanistan from a group of trivial and warring principalities into one state ruled by a dependant of the Government of India, an ally whose foreign relations would be conducted on his behalf by the Governor-General and the Foreign Office.'[5] The problem with this argument is that, while the East India Company did fail to obtain Afghanistan as a buffer, the Government of India achieved exactly that in 1880, following the exact criteria that Ingram laid out with an ally whose foreign relations could be controlled by the Indian Government. Ingram also claims that unrestricted access to the Sind and the Punjab were necessary for Britain's victory in the Game, two territories that the East India Company annexed after the First Afghan War.[6] The Government of India clearly believed that the Great Game was still ongoing in 1878 when they insisted that if Russia were to be allowed an envoy in Afghanistan, they must be allowed one as well, starting the Second Afghan War when they were refused.[7] If the Game was still ongoing at that time, and the Government of India were able to obtain Afghanistan as a buffer state at the end of it, then surely this could be seen as a reversal of the Company's defeat in 1842. At the very least, it is proof that that loss was not irreparable.

In contrast, Evgeny Sergeev argues that the Great Game began in the aftermath of the Crimean War, and as a result only covers the Second Afghan War in his analysis. He attributes the Second Afghan War to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the resulting conflict between Russia and Turkey beginning in 1877, which led to concerns among the British that the weakening of Turkish power would have a domino effect on the consolidation of Russian

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[3] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 167.
[4] Ibid, pp. 164-165.
[5] Ibid, p. 166.
[6] Ibid, p. 168.
[7] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* pp. 52-53.

power in the region.[8] Specifically, that it was feared that Russia would re-establish their alliance with Persia by offering to separate Herat from Afghanistan as an independent state, which would be a client state of Persia.[9] This culminated in a failed march towards India by Russia in 1878, which was suggested to take Afghanistan and Persia as client states, a march which never truly began due to the depletion of the Russian economy and army after the war with Turkey.[10] He focuses on the Russian ambassadorial mission led by Major General Nikolai Stolietov which attempted to encourage Amir Sher Ali Khan to allow a Russian expeditionary force to freely pass through Afghanistan, a mission which provoked a British response that they be allowed to send a diplomatic mission of their own, leading to the war.[11] Sergeev does not cover the events of the war itself, considering it outside the scope of his book, but concludes that the failure of Russia in their own ambassadorial missions in Afghanistan predetermined the result of the treaties at the end of the Second Afghan War which placed the Government of India in control of Afghanistan's foreign policy, resulting in Russia losing this aspect of the Game as Afghanistan was successfully turned into a 'buffer' for India.[12] Sergeev's analysis of the consequences of the Second Afghan War for the Great Game fits with the argument of this thesis, but is weakened by the lack of reference to the First Afghan War. If, as Sergeev argues, the Great Game began in 1856, then what was the reason for the First Afghan War, which began in very similar circumstances with Russia attempting to send a diplomatic envoy to Afghanistan while also allying with Persia to take Herat, while the East India Company attempted to secure Afghanistan as a buffer state?

Peter Hopkirk writes about the First Afghan War as part of his own narrative of the Great Game, which focuses on the stories of its individual participants. He frames the beginning of the war as inevitable due to the attitude of Lord Auckland, Governor-General of the East India Company, towards the negotiations, in which he instructed Alexander Burnes not to agree to anything that could offend Ranjit Singh of the Sikhs, who was Dost Mohammed's rival, before offending Dost Mohammed with a condescending letter demanding that he make peace with Ranjit.[13] As is usual in his writing, Hopkirk focuses heavily on the relationship and rivalry between the East India Company and Russian envoys, Alexander Burnes and Yan Vitkevich, and

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[8] E. Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2013), p. 172.
[9] Ibid, p. 173.
[10] Ibid, p. 182
[11] Ibid, pp. 184-187.
[12] Ibid, p. 189.
[13] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray Press, 1990), pp. 170-171.

blames Auckland for undercutting Burnes' ability to negotiate.[14] Writing about the origins of the Second Afghan War, Hopkirk, like Sergeev cites the aborted Russian march to Afghanistan and Persia, and Stolietov's simultaneous diplomatic mission to Afghanistan as the cause of conflict.[15] He blames the failure of the Company to maintain control of Afghanistan on the increase in taxes to pay for Shah Shuja's new regime, and the relationships between British soldiers and Afghan women, which offended the Afghan men.[16] Further, he blames the following military disaster on Elphinstone's poor leadership.[17] Hopkirk credits the success of the Government of India in the Second Afghan War on both the Commander in Chief, General Roberts' military skill and on their realisation that Abdur Rahman Khan, despite having been on good terms with the Russians in the past, was not actually pro-Russian but rather pro-Afghan and could be trusted to prevent Russia from taking Afghanistan.[18] Like Sergeev, he concludes that, with this victory the British had 'at last established a reasonably stable and united buffer state under a friendly ruler in Afghanistan.'[19] This, however, is the closest he comes to making a direct comparison between the First and Second Afghan War, and throughout his analysis of the wars, as he does throughout his analysis of the Great Game, he makes no distinction between East India Company rule of India and the direct British rule of India.

Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac also focus on Auckland's letter to Dost Mohammed, going into more detail about how he commanded him to appease the feelings of Ranjit Singh as well as cease all correspondence with Persia and Russia.[20] They argue that the Viceroy of India, Lord Lytton's attempts to negotiate with Sher Ali in 1877 were doomed to failure as he insisted on British missions being posted in Afghanistan, something the Amir could not agree to without offending the Russians.[21] Stolietov's diplomatic mission and the subsequent rejection of a British envoy is again presented as the cause of the Second Afghan War.[22] Of the riot that led to the death of Burnes and eventually the defeat of the Company, Meyer and Brysac mention rumours that it was caused either because of an affair Burnes had with an Afghan woman, or was meant to be a signal for a general uprising, but do not come down on one side or the

[14] Ibid, pp. 172-174.
[15] Ibid, pp. 380-381.
[16] Ibid, p. 238.
[17] Ibid, p. 257.
[18] Ibid, pp. 396-401.
[19] Ibid, p. 401.
[20] K. Meyer and S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1999), p. 85.
[21] Ibid, p. 182.
[22] Ibid, p.185.

other of the argument.[23] They also blame Elphinstone's advanced age for the disaster of his retreat from Kabul, but point out that this was not entirely his fault, as the command arrangements of the army meant that no one had any authority to replace or overrule him when it became clear that he was no longer able to command.[24] They conclude that the First Afghan War was the result of a British preoccupation with prestige and domestic politics, saying that the Russian menace was inflated and the fighting abilities of the Asian peoples underestimated, but also agree that the grand strategy was for British and Russian influence to extend across the centre of Asia until their borders met, and that it would be advantageous to Britain to ensure that this meeting take place as far from India as possible.[25] In their analysis of the Second Afghan War, they have a less optimistic outlook on the Government of India's performance, arguing that the war broke the confidence of many in Britain in British institutions.[26] They do agree, however, that the lesson learned from the conflict was that it would be more advantageous for them to interfere in Afghanistan as little as possible.[27]

In *Victoria's Wars,* Saul David contributes two chapters on the First Afghan War. He agrees with most other historians mentioned in this chapter that Burnes' negotiations with Dost Mohammed Khan were undercut by the East India Company's desire to maintain an alliance with Ranjit Singh, and that Russia's willingness to offer Dost Mohammed money to fight Ranjit Singh was the main reason that he was considering siding with them.[28] David defends Elphinstone to an extent, arguing that many of the mistakes made in the defence of the newly acquired Afghanistan were made before his arrival, that he did attempt to bolster the defences of Kabul before the rebellion broke out, and that his ability to command was compromised by his poor health, noting that he was actually declared unfit for command by a medical committee, but that by the time this information would have reached him, it was too late.[29] He suggests that the riot leading to the death of Burnes could have been the result of many Afghans blaming Burnes personally for the invasion of their homes.[30] He again defends Elphinstone somewhat in his conduct, suggesting that the true blame should lie with Auckland, for ordering the invasion in the first place, or Macnaghten, for downplaying and ignoring the threat of a rebellion.[31] He also points out that news of the rebellion did not reach Britain until

[23] Ibid, pp. 95-96.
[24] Ibid, pp.97-98.
[25] Ibid, p. 109
[26] Ibid, p. 199.
[27] Ibid.
[28] S. David, *Victoria's Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 18.
[29] Ibid, p. 44.
[30] Ibid, p. 46.
[31] Ibid, p. 70.

long after Elphinstone's army had begun its retreat from Kabul.[32] His book does not cover the Second Afghan War, and therefore no comparison between the two is made.

Robert Johnson briefly covers the First Afghan War, focusing on the question of whether it was a failure of diplomacy or Intelligence. He argues that it was a failure of intelligence, the overestimation of Russia's military capabilities at the time and a misunderstanding of local politics which led to the war.[33] Like Hopkirk and Sergeev, he blames Stolietov's diplomatic mission to Afghanistan for the war.[34] He is slightly less complimentary of the Government of India's solution to the problem, claiming that Abdur Rahman Khan's ruthlessness made Afghanistan less stable than they would have liked, but concludes that the alternatives were civil war, anarchy, or partition into smaller states would all have resulted in more opportunity for Russian intervention.[35] The Afghan Wars are only briefly covered in Johnson's analysis which is primarily focused on the development of intelligence.

There are also several historical texts that focus specifically on the Afghan Wars. D.S Richards argued that the First Afghan War was the result of the Russian expansions into the south and east 'at a rate which to political observers seemed inexorable'.[36] Regarding the transition between the East India Company and the Government of India, he makes brief reference to the Mutiny of 1857, mainly to note that several of the frontier tribes urged Dost Mohammed Khan to launch an attack on India during the Mutiny, which he refused.[37] Of the transfer of power carried out after the war, Richards draws attention to the military reforms implemented by the Government of India upon their assumption of power after 1857, paying specific attention to the implementation of British and Gurkha battalions to serve alongside their Muslim and Hindu Indian counterparts, so as to reduce the risk of another mutiny.[38] Richards considers this an improvement over the old army, but moves on from this quickly and does not mention any of the other changes the Government of India made.[39] He does, however, note the influence that Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, had over the Viceroys of the Government of India, with Lord Northbrook being removed and replaced by Lord Lytton due to

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[32] Ibid, p. 67.
[33] R. Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 66.
[34] Ibid, pp. 146-147.
[35] Ibid, p. 149
[36] D.S. Richards, *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Afghan Wars*, (London: Macmillan London Ltd, 1990), p. 4.
[37] Ibid, p. 66.
[38] Ibid, p. 67.
[39] Ibid, p. 74.

his disagreement with Salisbury's 'forward policy'.[40] This forward policy was a distinct change to the Government of India's former policy of caution that they had followed prior to 1874, when Disraeli's government was elected back in Britain, and was a direct cause of the Second Afghan War. This is a major disadvantage that the Government of India faced in comparison to the East India Company; while officials of the East India Company could be replaced by the British Government, the Government of India would automatically get a new Secretary of State for India every time a new government was elected, leading to significant changes in policy. However, Richards does not connect this issue to the greater influence that the British Government had over the Government of India, nor does he mention the East India Company or the differences between it and the Government of India in this section of the book.

In his own book on the Afghan Wars, Jules Stewart places the blame for the First Afghan War firmly on Foreign Secretary Lord Auckland, stating that he used the siege of Herat by the Persians (with Russian backing) in order to justify a more belligerent policy towards Afghanistan, despite the fact that the Persians had already retreated and the Russians already withdrawn their support by the time he did so.[41] He also emphasises the clash between Auckland and Burnes, in which Auckland wanted to ally with Ranjit Singh against Dost Mohammed, while Burnes wanted to strengthen relations with Dost Mohammed.[42] These two operating at cross-purposes resulted in the failure of both missions. Once the actual war began, Macnaghten and Burnes would need to make decisions too quickly to rely on advice from Britain. As to the causes of the Second Afghan War, Stewart also cites the election of Disraeli and subsequent appointment of Lytton as major factors that resulted in a more belligerent stance towards Afghanistan.[43] He also cites Sher Ali's fear that allowing a British Representative or advisor into his country would be a threat to his sovereignty.[44] On the whole, Stewart places the bulk of the blame for the Second Afghan War on the belligerence of Salisbury and Lytton, and notes that Louis Cavagnari, who would later be murdered because of the war, firmly opposed their policies. Stewart explicitly states that the 1857 Mutiny falls outside the scope of his work, except to note the lack of Afghan involvement in it.[45] In terms of the Government of India's reforms, he only takes a brief few paragraphs to mention the

[40] Ibid, pp. 74-75.
[41] J. Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), p. 29.
[42] Ibid, p. 32.
[43] Ibid, pp. 139-140.
[44] Ibid, pp. 142-144.
[45] Ibid, p. 128.

dissolution of the East India Company, and that the real seat of power was now the India Office in London, but then says nothing more about it.[46]

On the opposite side of the conflict, Alexander Morrison wrote an analysis of the Second Afghan War from the Russian perspective, in which he argues that the British fear that the Russians would invade India through Afghanistan was completely unfounded, as the Russians themselves believed that their troops were needed elsewhere and that the attempt would be too costly.[47] However, the Russians did plan to put pressure on the Government of India and make them fear for the stability of India, by making military manoeuvres along with their ally Turkestan. It was to this end that they sent the fateful envoy to Sher Ali, almost as an afterthought, to reassure him that they were not planning to invade his country.[48] Morrison also writes about the Russian reaction to the 1857 Mutiny, claiming that the Russians believed the uprising to be the result of the Company relying too heavily on Indian troops, while still not trusting them.[49] Morrison concludes that the Second Afghan War was the result of foolishness on the part of both the Government of India and the Russians, but argues that Lytton was already looking for an excuse to send a diplomatic mission to gain influence in Afghanistan, long before the Russians sent theirs.[50]

By studying this historiography, a gap emerges in the narrative of the Afghan Wars. While many historians have used the Afghan Wars as examples in their analysis of the Great Game, the two have rarely been directly compared, and where they have, there is a narrative that they were both part of the ongoing process of British imperialism in Asia, or of British rivalry with Russia in the Great Game. The differences between the two wars are barely explored, and the fact that each took place under a different governmental system is either reduced to a mention on a single page or completely ignored. Despite the very different outcomes of the two wars being acknowledged, the reasons for these differing outcomes are rarely explored in depth and in some cases, one war or the other is completely ignored as part of the Great Game. Though the motivations behind each war were similar, the differences between the methods used especially at the end of each war are crucial to understanding the changes that were made in India's foreign policy and particularly in its handling of the Great Game that took

[46]Ibid, pp. 130-131.
[47] A. Morrison, 'Beyond the 'Great Game': The Russian origins of the second Anglo–Afghan War,' *Modern Asian Studies, Volume 51, Issue 3* (2017), pp. 697-698.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid, p. 700.
[50] Ibid, pp. 702-704.

place when the East Indian Company was replaced by direct British rule after 1857. These differences will be explored in a direct comparison of the two wars for the rest of this chapter.

The Causes of the Afghan Wars

The First Afghan War originated as an internal power struggle over who would become the Amir of Afghanistan. In 1837, the East India Company had sent an envoy to Amir Dost Mohammed Khan in Kabul asking for an alliance against the Russians, ruled at that time by Tsar Nicholas I.[51] At the time, Dost Mohammed was himself looking for an ally against his rival, Ranjeet Singh of the Sikhs.[52] The British envoy, Sir Alexander Burnes, was inexperienced in political matters, and had been hamstrung in his negotiation power by his superior, Sir William Macnaghten, not giving him much authority and instructing him that Ranjeet Singh was a more important ally than Dost Mohammed.[53] This drove Dost Mohammed into the arms of the Russians, whom he thought would be a more accommodating ally.[54] However, when a Russian envoy was also sent to Afghanistan, Lord Auckland had sent a letter demanding that Dost Mohammed expel the Russians at once in 1838.[55] Angered by the rudeness of this letter, Dost Mohammed instead expelled the British envoy, leading to the East India Company planning to replace him with Shah Shuja Durrani, a former Amir who was willing to ally with anyone in order to regain his throne.[56] A further source of concern for the East India Company was the Persian siege of the Afghan city of Herat, Persia being a nation which, at the time, had close ties with Russia. The Persians, had previously launched an attack on Herat in 1834.[57] The Afghan army was comparatively weak compared to those of the countries around them and especially compared to those of the East India Company-controlled India and Russia, as they were disorganised and lacked formal training, especially when it came to large-scale battles.[58] While Persia had failed in their invasion before, if they launched another invasion backed by Russia, it would be possible that they would succeed. This left the Company in an unenviable position; if the negotiations between Russia and Afghanistan succeeded, they would have a Russia-backed Afghanistan right on the border with India, creating a perfect invasion route, and even if they failed, a Russia backed Persia could still invade, creating the same problem.

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[51] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars*, p. 14.
[52] Ibid*,* p. 15.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid*,* p. 16.
[55] T.A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1980), pp. 26-27.
[56] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 16.
[57] Ibid*,* p. 14.
[58] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* pp. 32-33.

In a letter in October of 1838, the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston opined to John McNeil, the Envoy to Persia, that Russia and Persia were working together in order to weaken the defences of British India and establish the political influence of Russia in Afghanistan.[59] McNeil had suggested to the Governor-General Lord Auckland in June of that year that it would be impossible for the Company to maintain any footing in Afghanistan if Herat were to fall into the hands of Persia.[60] This supports Richards' argument that the First Afghan War was caused by a fear of Russian expansion.[61] A more detailed account of the Persian invasions of Herat, and on the relationship between British-controlled India and Persia will be included in the next chapter, but for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to understand that this incident increased the East India Company's fear that Afghanistan would fall under Russian influence, either diplomatically or through invasion. In 1837, Alexander Burnes wrote to William Macnaghten of his fear that a treaty may be signed between Afghanistan and Persia.[62] According to Gregory Fremont-Barnes' analysis of the Afghan Wars, Dost Mohammed's decision to side with Russia stemmed from their need for allies against the Sikhs and Persians.[63] Burnes reported to Macnaghten of a meeting he had with Dost Mohammed in which the Amir expressed concern that Russia was using Persia as a tool to 'try her fortune in these countries as the British had tried it in India'.[64] Likewise, in 1837 Macnaghten reported to Claude Wade, diplomatic agent at Ludhiana, the largest city in Ranjit Singh's territory in the Punjab, that relations between the Afghans and Sikhs were irreconcilable and that Dost Mohammed was greatly concerned that if peace could not be brokered between the two, several of the Afghan chiefs, as Macnaghten calls them, would be forced to become dependent on Persia.[65] In December of that year, McNeil wrote to Palmerston that Dost Mohammed had been sent letters from the Russian Government advising him to seek protection from Persia against the Sikhs, which convinced McNeil that

[59] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Mr McNeil, 12 October 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 86.
[60] Letter from Mr McNeil to Lord Auckland, 25 June 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 83.
[61] Richards, *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Afghan Wars*, p. 4.
[62] Letter from Captain Burnes to Mr Macnaghten, 19 November 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 70.
[63] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 16.
[64] Letter from Captain Burnes to Mr Macnaghten, 31 October 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 66.
[65] Letter from Mr Secretary Macnaghten to Captain Wade, Political Agent at Loodiana, 15 May 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 40.

Russia and Persia were working together in Afghanistan.[66] All of this undermines Sergeev's argument that the Great Game did not begin until 1856.[67] If the Great Game can be defined as the political rivalry between Britain and Russia over control of Asia, then this correspondence demonstrates that the East India Company were already thinking in these terms as early as 1837.

It is ironic that the Sikhs were counted as a major threat to Afghanistan in light of the events of the Sikh Wars later on in the 'Great Game', after which the Sikhs, despite having been conquered by the Company, became some of their most loyal allies, and remained so for the Government of India after it assumed control of India in 1858. The differences between the two populations and the reasons why the Company was able to win the loyalty of the Sikhs, but not the Afghans, will be explored later in this chapter. From the Afghan side of things, Louis Dupree wrote that Dost Mohammed was trapped not only by the influence of Britain and Russia, but also his own people, having failed to unite all of the disparate ethnic and tribal groups that made up his country.[68] Despite officially having a single ruler, the Amir, Afghanistan was in reality a very divided nation, with each tribal leader having their own agenda and not necessarily being loyal to Dost Mohammed, something the Company felt they could take advantage of by presenting them with an alternative. Launching an invasion solved all of these problems at once in the eyes of the Company, as they would then be able to use their own troops to defend Afghanistan from Persia, while also improving their relationship with Ranjit Singh of the Sikhs by attacking his enemy.[69] However, the Company failed to take into account the difficulty of retaining control of Afghanistan after they would inevitably be forced to send most of their forces back to India to deal with other matters. The Governor-General, Lord Auckland, originally planned to place his chosen Amir, Shah Shuja Durrani, on the throne, and then pull all of his troops out of the country, but soon learned that this would be impossible, as while Dost Mohammed may not have earned the loyalty of all the tribal leaders, Shuja Shah was despised by almost everybody.[70]

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[66] Letter from Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, 10 April 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/1, p. 12

[67] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 3.

[68] L. Dupree, 'The First Anglo-Afghan War and the British Retreat of 1842: the Functions of History and Folklore', *East and West*, *Vol. 26, No. 3/4* (Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, September - December 1976), p. 509.

[69] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* pp. 32-33.

[70] Dupree, 'The First Anglo-Afghan War and the British Retreat of 1842: the Functions of History and Folklore', p. 509.

The Second Afghan War began in a very similar way. By the time of the Government of India, the opinion of Dost Mohammed in India had changed significantly. According to the Assistant Secretary to the Political Department, Adolphus Moore, Dost Mohammed had collaborated with the East India Company in 1856 and with the Government of India in 1863 to ensure that Herat stayed out of Persian hands, before dying of natural causes.[71] He had stood in opposition to India only once during that time, in 1849 during the Sikh Wars.[72] In 1856 when faced with the Russian occupation of Herat, J.W. Kaye opined that the Company should have just allied with Dost Mohammed from the beginning, rather than trying to overthrow him.[73] Reports from the era of the Government of India often point out the foolishness of the First Afghan War, for example in a memorandum from the Viceroy Lord Lawrence in 1874, citing Dost Mohammed as one of the greatest allies of the British in India and lamenting having lost his trust.[74] How then, could the Government of India have found themselves in the same situation that the Company faced in 1839? As was often the case during this time period, the answer was the need to prevent the spread of Russian influence in the region.

In 1878, Russia sent an uninvited envoy, Nikolai Stolietov to the new Amir, Dost Mohammed's son Sher Ali Khan, to discuss 'certain matters of urgency which concern the interests of both India and Afghanistan.'[75] Despite Sher Ali's attempts to stop it, the envoy made it to Kabul. With this, Britain demanded that they be allowed to send their own envoy, Neville Bowles Chamberlain and when he was prevented from entering Afghanistan, war was declared.[76] Lytton and his Council wrote a letter to Viscount Cranbrook, who had become Secretary of State for India earlier that year, reporting this incident, in which they explained that the envoy had been sent in order to determine Sher Ali's intentions following his closer relations with Russia, and that the turning away of the envoy indicated that diplomacy was now impossible.[77] In his memoirs, Lord Roberts, eventual Field Marshall of the Indian Army under the Government of India, writes that the war between Russia and Turkey, which had been ongoing

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[71] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* pp. 84-85.
[72] Memorandum from A.W. Moore of the Political and Secret Department on the Afghan difficulty, 31 August 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 236.
[73] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3* (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), p. 400.
[74] Memorandum on the Central Asian Question from Lord Lawrence, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 4 November 1874, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 9.
[75] Letter from the Viceroy of India to Amir Sher Ali Khan, 7 September 1878, Confidential (3871.) Further Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, Nov 1877 - Dec 1878, The National Archives, FO 539/15, p. 141.
[76] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* pp. 52-53.
[77] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to Viscount Cranbrook, 26 September 1878, Confidential (3871.) Further Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, Nov 1877 - Dec 1878, The National Archives, FO 539/15, p. 147.

for more than a year, had made the British uneasy that they would be dragged into it. As a result, they sent for 5,000 soldiers to be raised in India and sent to Malta, just in case. It was this, Roberts believed, that caused the increased Russian activity in Central Asia in 1878 onwards, eventually culminating in them sending their envoy to Afghanistan.[78]

By this time the telegraph had been invented, and yet despite the greater speed of communication, the Government decided again to allow their officials in India to take care of Indian affairs themselves. General Roberts wrote that Lytton had requested instructions from the British Government as to whether Afghanistan's conduct with Russia should be treated as a matter between the Government of India and the Amir, or a broader British imperial question.[79] If it were to be judged to be a matter for the Government of India to deal with, he proposed that he send his own envoy to Russia, and this proposal was accepted by the British Government, indicating that they agreed that it was a matter for the Government of India to resolve.[80] Lytton also reportedly did not send any reports to the British Government on the status of his negotiations with Sher Ali Khan to set up an embassy in Kabul between his arrival in India in April 1876 and May 1877, when the negotiations began to break down, saying that he was following the instructions of the Secretary of State and thus no report was needed until the matter was settled.[81] These reports come from William Muir, Arthur Hobhouse, and Henry Norman, all members of Lytton's Government, who argued that the Secretary of State did not lay down a fixed course for the negotiation and that the only instruction given for Lytton was the initial establishment of a preliminary embassy, and complained that their objections to Lytton's policy were not reported to the British Government.[82] Of the three, Muir had been a financial member of Viceroy Northbrook's council and briefly Lytton's before becoming a member of the Council of India, chief advisors to the Secretary of State for India in London in 1876, Hobhouse had been a law member of Lytton's council, and Norman had been a military member. While the Council of India, which was based in London and advised the Secretary of State, had up to fifteen members, the Viceroy's council, based in India, had only six, so these would have been some of Lytton's closest advisors. Despite this lack of reporting on matters involving Afghanistan, for an entire year, Lytton kept his position leading into the Second

[78] F. Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* (Bentley and Son: London, 1898), p. 342.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Note on Secret Despatch of the Government of India No. 36 by H. W. Norman, 15 March 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 289.
[82] Despatch from India on the Dissents of Sir H. Norman, Sir A. Hobhouse and Sir W. Muir on Afghan Policy, 19 March 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 289.

Afghan War, indicating that the British Government were not excessively concerned with his lack of communication. Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for India, wrote that as the British Government could control Lytton if they needed to, and the position of Viceroy was one which lasted for only a five-year term, and since his policies had also been agreed upon by his predecessor Northbrook, there was no need to exert any further control over him or interfere in his policies due to his personal proclivities.[83] Salisbury was also in agreement with Lytton on his 'forward' policies towards Russia, so he would have little reason to curtail him.[84]

Despite the similar circumstances of these two wars, the organisations in charge of actually fighting them had been operating in very different ways leading up to that point. The East India Company had been undergoing a period of rapid expansion, and by 1839 had control of almost all of India. They were confident in their armies and were constantly on the offensive. By contrast, the Government of India were cautious, still recovering from the events of the Mutiny of 1857. In the years leading up to the Second Afghan War, Russia had made several incursions into Central Asia, and the Government of India had done nothing to stop them. However, the idea of an Afghanistan allied with Russia, right on India's doorstep, was too much for the Government of India to accept. It should also be noted that, in the time since the First Afghan War, the boundaries of British India had expanded to include an area known as the North-West Frontier, which was inhabited mostly by various Afghan tribes, removing the gap between India and Afghanistan and raising tensions between them as the disparate tribes who would normally be enemies, allied together against the hated invaders.[85]

Initial Military Success

As the reasons for going to war and the circumstances leading up to it were very similar in both cases, the Afghan Wars are excellent case studies in comparing the approaches of the East India Company and Government of India to war. The first aspect of the wars that should be discussed are the initial invasions and open warfare. Both armies did exceptionally well in the initial stages of their war, due to the vast discrepancies in both equipment and training between them and the Afghan armies. In the First Afghan War, the only real obstacle to the East India Company was the fortress at Ghazni. This fortress was Afghanistan's primary defensive position, and the Company feared that a long siege would be disadvantageous to

[83] Memorandum from Lord Salisbury to the Council of India on the North-West Frontier, 31 August 1877, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 19 Oct 1876 - 8 Mar 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/140, p. 102.
[84] Richards, *The Savage Frontier: A History of the Afghan Wars*, pp. 74-75.
[85] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* pp. 47-48.

them. This was especially an issue as Lieutenant General John Keene, the initial officer in command of the expedition, had left his siege weapons behind in Kandahar, not anticipating how strong the fortress walls would be, and had also marched without sufficient supplies for a lengthy siege.[86] Keene himself admitted to having underestimated the strength of the fortress in his letter to Auckland after the battle.[87] This was not entirely his fault, as a failure of intelligence gathering had left him expecting much weaker defences.[88] Keene writes that none of the descriptions of the fortress he had received, including from other East India Company officers who had seen it, accurately described its fortifications.[89] Despite that, it is still a foolish decision not to bring siege weapons to a siege battle, and the lack of accurate intelligence gathering just further shows that the East India Company entered the war unprepared. T.A. Heathcote points out that Dost Mohammed, fearing an attack from the Sikhs, had stationed his best troops and commanders to block the Kyber Pass, leaving Ghazni less well defended, another stroke of luck for the Company.[90] Henry Durand, who fought in the First Afghan War, wrote that 'the plan of the Campaign violated in a glaring manner all usual military precautions.'[91] He goes on to note that, in all of the Company's wars in the East, the Company had been reckless and relied heavily on the inferiority of organisation in the armies of their enemies, but believes that the First Afghan War was the most 'wild, ill-considered, and adventurous a scheme of far-distant aggression' that the Company had ever engaged in.[92]

However, luckily for them, a defector climbed over the walls of the fortress to deliver a message that one of the gates was in a bad state of repairs. Interestingly, this deserter was Abdul Rashed Khan, the nephew of Dost Mohammed Khan himself. He had become a political rival of Dost Mohammed, and now hoped to get rid of him by siding with the Company.[93] Armed with this knowledge, the Company detonated gunpowder on the gate, allowing them to enter the fortress and win the battle far more quickly than they had anticipated. However, even this strategy was not without its setbacks. Durand, who volunteered to lead the explosives party, believed that the attack was full of risk and would result in a great loss of

[86] W. Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, (London: A&C Black, 2013), p. 190.
[87] Letter from J. Keene to Lord Auckland, 24 July 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 62, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/143, p. 606.
[88] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 183.
[89] Letter from J. Keene to Lord Auckland, 24 July 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 62, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/143, p. 606.
[90] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 41.
[91] H. Durand (ed), *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1879), p. 92.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 185.

men, but with only three days of supplies remaining, Keane had no choice but to proceed.[94] Furthermore, Keane alerted the envoy and political officer Macnaghten of the plan of attack, in the hope that he would be ready regardless of whether it was successful or not. For some reason, Macnaghten spread the plan of attack across the camp of Shah Shuja, ruining the element of surprise when the rumours inevitably spread to the fortress.[95] Interestingly, Keene also did not mention the defector in his report to Auckland, instead taking credit for the idea to destroy the gate himself.[96]

However, the Afghans got the planned night of attack wrong by one day, and the explosives were able to be set in secret, without loss of men as Durand had feared. Due to the unexpected assistance of Abdul Rashed, the Company were able to bypass the defences of the fortress entirely, and lost only 200 men in this battle, while they killed 1000 of the enemy and captured a further 1600. Shortly after the battle, Keene wrote to Lord Auckland that his losses were 'wonderfully small', with the combined total of killed and wounded being less than 500, while the enemies' losses were 'immense'.[97] However, it should be noted that even in the moment of victory, the Company were still plagued with unclear leadership as conflicting orders prevented the soldiers from advancing until one of the buglers blew the signal to advance instead of retreat, against orders.[98] William Dalrymple argues that the Company's victory here was largely due to luck, and that Keene's mistake in leaving without proper weapons or supplies would have cost them the battle if not for the tremendous good fortune of Abdul Rashed's defection.[99] While this may be a little harsh, as the Company did win a decisive victory in this battle, it is undeniable that, through poor leadership, they made it far more difficult for themselves than necessary. This would not be the last time that incompetent generals and officials would prove a thorn in the side of the East India Company over the course of the war, and they would not be rescued by the appearance of a convenient defector a second time. Following this, the Company were able to use the abundant supplies in Ghazni to speed up their advance and capture Kabul with no resistance, allowing Shuja to be successfully enthroned. Heathcote argues that, were it not for the events that would follow, this would have been considered one of the British Indian army's most successful

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[94] Durand (ed), *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, pp. 174-175.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Letter from J. Keene to Lord Auckland, 24 July 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 62, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/143, p. 608.
[97] Letter from J. Keene to Lord Auckland, 24 July 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 62, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/143, p. 612.
[98] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 24.
[99] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 190.

campaigns.[100] To indicate what the Government of India thought about this battle, a memorandum laid before their Council in India in 1877 by Robert Home, assistant quarter-master general, stated 'The English, or rather Anglo-Indian, Army conquered Afghanistan with the greatest of ease…there was no difficulty in these operations. As a war there was nothing, Ghazni was stormed with ease.'[101]

The Second Afghan War (1878-1880) began in a similar manner; however, the Government of India used their larger numbers to launch a three-pronged attack, rather than marching in a single group as the East India Company had. Lieutenant General Sir Samuel Browne, in command of one of these divisions, launched the first attack of the war at Ali Masjid, another Afghan fortress. Unlike Keene, Browne had brought sufficient cannons to breach the walls, and collapsed a central section of the fortress. The British forces had the Afghans massively outgunned, as the Afghans weapons were outdated compared to the British Indian army's new breech-loaders.[102] Despite the loss of two officers, Major Birch and Lieutenant Fitzgerald, due to unclear orders on whether to wait until nightfall to attack or not, the British were still able to win the battle fairly easily, though they did not kill or capture anywhere near as many Afghan soldiers as the Company had at Ghazni.[103] This victory left the northern route to Kabul virtually undefended.

Despite the victory, however, Lytton believed that Browne should be court-martialled, due to his confused handling of the situation and demoralisation of his men after two flanking brigades had become separated from the rest of the army and had been unable to support the attack until the last moment.[104] However, the Afghan side was not united either. Intelligence agents of the British Indian government reported to the Foreign Office diplomat in Persia, Ronald Thomson, that rebellions had broken out in the Kohistan district near Kabul, and that Sher Ali was forced to divert a regiment to deal with them, but that that regiment was defeated.[105] The report describes this as an indication that Sher Ali's defeat was inevitable.[106] Meanwhile, General Frederick Roberts was able to capture the strategic Peiwar Kotal Pass,

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[100] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 43.
[101] Chronological table of the events connected with the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan from R. Home, Assistant Quarter-Master General, 10 October 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 224.
[102] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 103.
[103] Ibid*,* p. 106.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr R. Thomson, 9 November 1879, Confidential (4100.) Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia (In continuation of Confidential Paper No. 3871), Dec 1878 - Dec 1879, The National Archives, FO 539/16, p. 19.
[106] Ibid.

opening the path to Kabul even further. Roberts, in his first command, writes of this incident in his memoirs, speaking of the importance of keeping his true strategy a secret to all but himself and a few trusted advisors. Knowing that the Afghans would have spies in his camp, Roberts intentionally spread rumours of a false plan of attack, to ensure that he would be able to catch the enemy off guard.[107] This shows a marked improvement over Keene and Macnacghten and the East India Company, who had almost ruined their own strategy at Ghazni by letting the plan of attack spread throughout their camp. At that point, Sher Ali became desperate and appealed to the Russians for assistance, but the Russians simply advised him to surrender.[108] It appears that despite the success of the British attack, the Russians were unconcerned about having a British-controlled Afghanistan on their doorstep.

Morrison wrote that the tsar was, at that time, determined not to be embroiled in another European War, and therefore refused to support Sher Ali in any military fashion. Indeed, the tsar had already accepted that, as Sher Ali had already lost, he would have to give up on Russian influence in Afghanistan for the time being.[109] This would indicate that the Government of India's invasion of Afghanistan was in fact a success. Regardless of the further conflict with the Afghans that would happen later such as the murder of the British Representative Louis Cavagnari, their objective had been to remove Russian influence from Afghanistan, and the Russians had already recalled their diplomatic mission to Russia when it became clear that Sher Ali would be deposed. However the St Petersburg Gazette in September 1879 condemned the invasion, declaring that it was in the best interests of both countries for Afghanistan to remain a neutral zone, and that Britain could not be allowed to gain a foothold further north, in Central Asian countries such as Khiva and Bukhara.[110] The Khanate of Khiva was a state centred around the city of the same name, which lay in Central Asia between the territories controlled by Russia and India. The Emirate of Bukhara similarly had a capital of the same name and was also located in Central Asia. Ironically, this is exactly what the British were saying about Russia at the time, as by 1879, both Khiva and Bukhara were under Russian control. However, it would have still been possible for the Russians to

[107] Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* p. 356.
[108] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 58.
[109] Morrison, 'Beyond the 'Great Game': The Russian origins of the second Anglo–Afghan War,' pp. 723-724.
[110] Extract from the St Petersburg Gazette of 1 October 1879, Confidential (4100.) Further Correspondence respecting Affairs in Central Asia (In continuation of Confidential Paper No. 3871), Dec 1878 - Dec 1879, The National Archives, FO 539/16, p. 210.

regain their influence in Afghanistan, if the Government of India made the same mistakes with the occupation as the East India Company had.

The Challenges of Maintaining Power as an Occupying Force

Both the East India Company and the Government of India had easily invaded Afghanistan and captured the capital of Kabul. Both armies had the Afghan armies of the time massively outmanned and outgunned, and while the results of the battles were never truly in doubt, the number of casualties the British and Indian forces would take was. The East India Company made a major mistake by leaving their siege weapons behind before the Battle of Ghazni and escaped a long and costly siege due to the defection of Abdul Rashed Khan. Meanwhile, despite some casualties caused by miscommunication at Ali Masjid, the Government of India planned their attack far better and utilized their advantages more effectively. The East India Company did inflict more casualties on the enemy than the Government of India did, but this ended up being unimportant as there were no more major battles for the lack of men to matter. On balance, the Government of India were more effective in the early stages of their Afghan War than the East India Company were in theirs.

However, taking Afghanistan was not the same as keeping it. Both the East India Company and the Government of India were faced with internal turmoil in Afghanistan that threatened to end their control over the region. In the case of the East India Company, their ally, Shuja, ruled with an iron fist and was incredibly unpopular with the Afghan people. Macnaghten claimed that Shuja's return was welcomed by every 'man of respectability' in the country, while also acknowledging that he had intercepted letters from influential leaders in the country denouncing him for bringing 'infidels' to the country.[111] He claims that when Shah Shuja entered the city of Kandahar, he was gratefully welcomed by all the citizens, the same citizens had already overthrown him once and would overthrow him again only a year later, demonstrating the incorrect assumptions of the Company.[112] Burnes expressed similar sentiments, acknowledging that some of the more powerful Afghan chiefs were opposed to Shuja and were convincing the people to oppose him on religious grounds, but remaining confident that the majority were supporters of Shuja.[113] Meanwhile, Dost Mohammed had fled

[111] Extract from a letter from the Envoy and Minister to the Court of Shah Shuja, 24 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, pp. 92-94.
[112] Extract from a letter from the Envoy and Minister to the Court of Shah Shuja, 26 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, p. 94.
[113] Extract from an official letter from Lt. Colonel Alexander Burnes, 25 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, p. 96.

to Bukhara, but had been thrown in jail by the Amir there.[114] A letter from Macnaghten indicated that he believed the war was over and that the sirdars who still supported Dost Mohammed were hated by their followers and would soon surrender.[115] Sirdar is a term referring to a high ranking hereditary noble or military leader. In 1840, Dost Mohammed managed to escape and return to Afghanistan where he defeated the 2nd Bengal Cavalry in November of that year.[116] This loss was largely because of the refusal of the Indian soldiers to charge with their commander, Captain Fraser into battle.[117] The soldiers instead fled at the sight of the Afghan cavalry, and the army was routed.[118]

These issues were some of the main underlying flaws that, even before 1857, hindered the East India Company's defence of India from Russia, which the Government of India would seek to work on after they took over. Meanwhile, most of the East India Company's troops had returned to India, leaving only 1,500 British soldiers and 4,500 Indian soldiers behind.[119] Between Shuja's harsh rule and the resentment of the Afghans at being occupied by foreign soldiers, it soon became clear that they did not have enough men to keep the peace. Sir Henry Willock, who had been the Envoy to Persia from 1815-1826 and would go on to become the Chairman of the East India Company's Court of Directors, its foremost policy-making body in London, from 1844-45, wrote that the reason for Shuja's unpopularity compared to Dost Mohammed was that Dost Mohammed had a relatively modest lifestyle, while Shah Shuja lived much more extravagantly and therefore required much more taxation to fund this.[120] Willock believed that it would be impossible for Shuja to remain in power without constant support from Company forces.[121] At this time, the first political officer of the East India Company was William Macnaghten, who attempted to help the soldiers settle in more and raise morale by bringing their families to live with them, but this only angered the Afghans further.[122] Macnaghten, who had a reputation for being arrogant and elitist, was almost as unpopular with the Afghans as Shuja was. As shown by Dalrymple, Macnaghten was arrogant

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[114] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 49.
[115] Letter from W.H. Macnaghten to T.H. Maddock, Secretary to the Government of India with the Governor-General, 24 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, p. 102.
[116] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919*, p. 49.
[117] J.L. Lee, *Afghanistan: A History from 1260 to the Present* (London: Reaktion Books, 2022), p. 254.
[118] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 50.
[119] Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*, p. 54.
[120] Memorandum from Sir Henry Willock to Lord Aberdeen, 4 September 1841, Printed copies of letters from Sir Henry Willock to successive British Foreign Secretaries discussing the situation in Persia, The British Library, Mss Eur F126/18, p. 5.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 52.

and condescending towards even his own fellow officers, let alone a people that were still widely considered backwards by the British at the time. Even on the day of his death, he insisted that there was no danger, ignoring the warnings of Mackenzie and Elphinstone as he 'knew these matters better than them'.[123] As Dupree wrote, Macnaghten was essentially running a parallel government using copious amounts of gold, which was resented by even Shuja, let alone the rest of the Afghan population.[124]

The issue that angered the Afghans more than any other was that the East India Company's soldiers had begun sleeping with Afghan women. Afghanistan was a very conservative society in which 'honour killings' were still commonplace and having outsiders sleeping with their women was even more disgraceful in their eyes, with it being considered a national embarrassment.[125] Even more enraging to the Afghans was the possibility that some of these women would give birth to mixed race children. A particular target of their rage was the Company's second political officer, Sir Alexander Burnes.[126] After Dost Mohammed's initial victory, he was quickly defeated and exiled to India, but his influence lingered as he was still far more popular than Shuja. Disaffected Afghan tribes were beginning to rally around the idea of resistance against British rule, leading to a rebellion in 1841. Although this rebellion was swiftly crushed, Macnaghten made a serious mistake when he demanded that the ringleaders send their children to Shuja's court as hostages. Due to Shuja's reputation for cruelty, this caused the chiefs to refuse to surrender and demand that Dost Mohammed be restored to power.[127] Caught off guard, Macnaghten wavered between harsh reprisals and compromise, causing him to seem weak in the eyes of the Afghan public, causing more rebellions to spring up. Even some of Shuja's own ministers joined the resistance, including members of his own clan, the Durrani, such were the depths of his unpopularity.[128]

All of this came to a head in November of 1941, when a Kashmiri slave girl who belonged to an Afghan chief ran away to Alexander Burnes' house. This was the last straw and an angry mob marched to Burnes' house and murdered him, his brother, wife and children, along with all of the soldiers guarding them.[129] Despite being only five minutes away, no Company soldiers

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[123] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 350.
[124] Dupree, 'The First Anglo-Afghan War and the British Retreat of 1842: the Functions of History and Folklore', p. 509.
[125] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 51.
[126] Ibid.
[127] M. Yapp, 'The Revolutions of 1841–2 in Afghanistan', *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 27, Issue 2 (1964), p. 335.
[128] Ibid, p. 336.
[129] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 53.

arrived to help, Shuja mobilised his own men, but they retreated after losing 200 men. The cramped alleyways favoured the rioters who could shoot at them from the houses above and stage ambushes, and Shuja fell into a great depression upon realising how much his people hated him. Lady Florentia Sale, the wife of Company General Robert Sale, was living in Kabul at the time, and kept a journal of her experiences. She describes the confusion of the initial days of the revolt, in which no one knew whether Burnes was alive or dead, and Company officers were being attacked all over the city, including Lady Sale's son in law.[130] She also notes that, in the days leading up to the attack, Macnaghten had written to Auckland requesting more men, but on the advice of Burnes he wrote another letter rescinding that request.[131] Furthermore Burnes had been told the day before the revolt by the Afghan chief Taj Mohammed Khan that an insurrection was imminent, and had dismissed and laughed at the possibility.[132]

The leader of the Afghan forces was a man named Mohammed Akbar Khan, the son of Dost Mohammed, while General William Elphinstone was chosen to lead the Company's counterattack. Before another battle could begin, Macnaghten secretly attempted to negotiate to make Akbar Khan Afghanistan's vizier in exchange for standing down, while simultaneously planning to have him assassinated. While simultaneously offering the tribal chiefs up to 10,000 rupees to the man who could kill Akbar Khan, Macnaghten met with Akbar himself, where he was amazingly offered a down payment of £300,000 and yearly payment of £40,000 to cut a secret deal to ally with him.[133] Despite the surprisingly generous terms of the deal, considering the position the Company was in, Macnaghten was dangerously overconfident in the success of his plan. However, Akbar Khan had already found out about his plans, and Macnaghten was seized and killed at the negotiation. Macnaghten's military secretary, George Lawrence, angrily writes of how, despite some of the army having been close enough to see the attack through their field-glasses, not a single soldier was sent to rescue Macnaghten or retrieve his body.[134] Despite Macnaghten's own treachery, which most in the Company were unaware of, Lawrence considered his murder a vile betrayal, especially as it was done at a negotiation.[135] Somewhat amusingly, Lawrence laments that Macnaghten had fallen victim to his own 'unbending sense of honour' in trusting Akbar Khan, when in

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[130] F. Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2006), p. 35.
[131] Ibid, p. 23.
[132] Ibid, p. 48.
[133] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 348.
[134] G. Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, (London: J. Murray, 1874), p. 138.
[135] Ibid, pp. 124-25.

reality it was the exact opposite reason that he died. As for Akbar Khan's own account of events, he would describe the incident in a letter to Abdur Samed Khan Naib of Bukhara, which Abdur Samed would pass on to the Company and eventually into the hands of John McNeil, Envoy to Persia. In the letter, Akbar Khan claimed that he had decided to kill Macnaghten after receiving a bribe from him to betray Dost Mohammed and place Shah Shuja on the throne.[136] Throughout the letter, he talked about how it was impossible to trust the Company, who he referred to as 'the Faithless' as they were the enemies of Islam, and because they had 'beguiled many of the faithful, and seduced them from the path of rectitude', which most likely refers to the Company officers' affairs with Afghan women.[137] It was clear that the East India Company had utterly failed to maintain the control over Afghanistan that they had so easily conquered.

It is once again clear that, in Macnaghten and Burnes, the East India Company had assigned officials to positions for which they were not equipped. Lady Sale suggested that the Company had selected Macnaghten for his position specifically because he was a moderate and unlikely to resort to violence, however these same traits caused him to delude himself into thinking Afghanistan had been restored to a peaceful state by his occupation.[138] In Macnaghten's case, he was one of the most trusted advisors of Lord Auckland, and was well known for being very intelligent, with a reputation as a scholar and linguist.[139] Indeed, Macnaghten was not a stupid man, but rather unsuited for this particular position; he was too arrogant to gain the support and trust of the Afghans. Correspondence from Macnaghten demonstrates that he was convinced that Shah Shuja was beloved and would be welcomed by his people, saying that the people of Afghanistan were already flocking to Shuja's banner.[140] Despite this, he still acknowledged that he had intercepted letters from sirdars (military leaders) discussing their opposition to Shah Shuja and calling for a holy war against him and his 'infidel' allies, remaining confident that the majority supported Shuja.[141] Lady Sale also reports witnessing Macnaghten dismissing some of these letters as forgeries designed to fool the Company forces

[136] Letter from Mohammed Akbar Khan to Abdur Samed Khan, translated by J. Shiel, 26 December 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 48, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/410, pp. 284-285.
[137] Ibid, pp. 283-284.
[138] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan, 1841-42,* p. 23.
[139] Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*, p. 9.
[140] Extract from a letter from the Envoy and Minister to the Court of Shah Shuja, 24 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, pp. 90-91.
[141] Ibid, p. 92.

into suspecting innocent men, which included letters suggesting that Shah Shuja himself was planning to betray them.[142]

Burnes had been an explorer and diplomat, and was famous for his knowledge of the customs of South-East Asia which allowed him access to parts of the region that Europeans had never been able to gain a foothold in before.[143] Burnes had also already been in Kabul negotiating with Dost Mohammed Khan before the outbreak of war, so he would have seemed like a good choice for the position.[144] He had actually advised Auckland against the war, preferring to keep Dost Mohammed on the throne, and attempt to form an alliance with him.[145] Of all of the leading officials and generals of the East India Company, Burnes ironically seemed the most sensible, considering that it was his actions that directly led to the revolt that ended the occupation. Yet despite his misgivings about the invasion, after the initial conquest of Kandahar he wrote that he was convinced that Shah Shuja was beloved by his people and would be welcomed enthusiastically.[146] Like Macnaghten, Burnes acknowledged that influential Afghan chiefs were fomenting opposition to Shuja on religious grounds, but did not believe they would succeed.[147] On the surface, Macnaghten and Burnes seemed like perfectly fine choices to lead the diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan. The Company were also not helped by the presence of Shah Shuja, and this was a problem that they could and should have seen coming. Shuja's hatred of his own people, and they of him, was well known, and choosing him as their Amir was possibly their most significant mistake.

It is interesting to note that the East India Company would have much more success enlisting the loyalties of both the Sikhs and the Gurkhas even after having gone to war with them, and yet failed so utterly at winning the loyalties of the Afghans. Why then, did the East India Company fail in this instance? Certainly, much of the blame needs to be laid at the feet of Macnaghten and Burnes, who seemed determined to anger the Afghans in every way possible with their lavish lifestyles. Saul David argued that the blame should lie at the feet of both Lord Auckland and William Macnaghten; Auckland for ordering what David considers a pointless and wasteful invasion in the first place, and Macnaghten for ignoring and downplaying the

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[142] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan, 1841-42*, p. 47.
[143] Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*, p. 18.
[144] Letter from A. Burnes to W. Macnaghten, 12 May 1838, Enclosures to Secret Letters to India, Vol 49, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/130, pp. 416-417.
[145] Stewart, *On Afghanistan's Plains: The Story of Britain's Afghan Wars*, p. 32.
[146] Extract from an official letter from Lt. Colonel Alexander Burnes, 25 April 1839, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 14, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/376, p. 96.
[147] Ibid.

warning signs that the Afghans would rebel against the Company.[148] In Auckland's case, it's true that the threat of a Russian invasion of India was exaggerated during this time, but Auckland does seem to have sincerely believed in it. After all, he was receiving reports from people like John McNeil telling him that the Company needed to maintain a foothold in Afghanistan because of Russia's foothold in Persia.[149] In his own letters, Auckland appears genuinely concerned about what he calls Persia's 'servility to Russian influence' and urges McNeil to do all he can to alleviate it.[150] However by invading Afghanistan Auckland only made the situation worse.

It would seem that Auckland was trying to avoid having to choose between having the Sikhs as his allies and having the Afghans, as the two refused to coexist, he invaded what he saw as the weaker power, in order to retain both 'buffers.' His mistake came in underestimating the capabilities of the Afghans, and leaving fewer troops to defend the territory than were needed, as Meyer and Brysac argued.[151] As for Macnaghten, its' true that he underestimated the Afghans, and was not suited to the command of an occupying force. The choice of Shah Shuja to become the new Amir was also a significant mistake, as the man had been overthrown by his own people in 1809 and the Company should have known that reinstating him would be an unpopular decision. But at the heart of the difference between the First Afghan War and the Sikh Wars was that British officers simply respected the Sikhs far more than they did the Afghans. Even while fighting against them, the Company men believed the Sikhs were worthy opponents, and once they were defeated and integrated into the army, they were given preferential treatment over the other Indian soldiers. An example of this is Joseph Cunningham, a British officer in the East India Company army who wrote what is considered to be the first complimentary account of the Sikhs written by a foreigner.[152] Years later, during the time of the Government of India, Roberts also wrote in a very complimentary manner of both the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, notably trusting them far more than he does the other soldiers under his command.[153] In return, the Sikhs and Gurkhas also respected the British as worthy adversaries and became fiercely loyal after having joined them. This level of mutual respect simply did not exist among the British, who saw the Afghans as bloodthirsty savages,

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[148] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 70
[149] Letter from Mr McNeil to Lord Auckland, 25 June 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 83.
[150] Letter from Lord Auckland to Mr McNeil, 15 September 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2 p. 46.
[151] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India*, p. 109.
[152] J. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej* (London: J. Murray, 1849).
[153] Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* pp. 358-362.

and the Afghans, who saw the British as invading infidels, as can be seen in Captain George Lawrence's description of the death of Macnaghten.[154]

The Government of India also faced similar internal issues during their own occupation of India. After the death of Sher Ali in 1879, his son, Mohammed Yakub Khan, signed the Treaty of Gandamak in order to prevent the British from invading the rest of the country. In exchange for peace, the Government of India would be allowed to control Afghanistan's foreign affairs, which was what they actually wanted, a friendly 'buffer' state between them and Russia. The treaty specifically states 'His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign State, except with the concurrence of the British Government.'[155] The Afghans also had to guarantee the safety of British agents and traders within their territory.[156] However, in keeping with the First Afghan War, most of the British forces returned to India while some were left behind in major strategic locations including Kabul, a serious mistake which they should have learned from after what had happened the first time. Even at this point, the question of who would be the best choice for the Amirship of Afghanistan was a point of discussion within the Government of India. Even before the Government of India knew for sure that Sher Ali was dead, there were already doubts that Yakub would be the best choice to serve the Government of India's interests, along with doubts at first that he would be willing to negotiate for peace.[157] Lytton believed this to be of the utmost importance because 'we cannot get an Afghan treaty without an Afghan government willing to sign it and fairly able to maintain it'.[158] It would soon become clear that Yakub was unable, or possibly unwilling, to maintain the treaty. On 3 September, 1879, only four months after the treaty was signed, an uprising in Kabul led to the death of one of Britain's representatives, Sir Louis Cavagnari.[159] The role of Yakub Khan is often overlooked, but Gerald Morgan suggests that he demonstrates a similarity between the First and Second Afghan Wars, comparing his appointment to that of Shah Shuja, as both were weak Amirs unprepared for the position envisaged by the British,

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[154] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 135-138.
[155] Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, concluded at Gandamak on the 26 May 1879, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-161/10, p. 1.
[156] Ibid, p. 2.
[157] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, The proposed rectification of the Western Frontier of India, 5 November 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 164.
[158] Treaty between the British Government and His Highness Muhammad Yakub Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies, concluded at Gandamak on the 26 May 1879, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-161/10, p. 2.
[159] R. Wilkinson-Latham, *North-West Frontier 1837–1947* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1977), p. 164.

with disastrous results.[160] However, there are several key differences between the two. Firstly, Yakub was not despised by the Afghan people as Shuja had been. Indeed, when Cavagnari was murdered, Yakub was suspected of having been the mastermind behind the crime.[161]

Later, when the Government of India were attempting to put Adbur Rahman Khan on the throne, Yakub's son, Ayub, was able to gain enough support from the tribes that the Government of India feared that he would be able to take Abdur Rahman's support and become Amir himself.[162] The problems with Shah Shuja and Yakub Khan as Amirs were actually in contrast with one another; while Shah Shuja was loyal to the Company, but hated by his people, thus making them hate the Company more by association, whereas under Yakub, the Afghan people disliked his rule specifically because of his association with the Company, calling him a puppet ruler. However, the immediate cause of riot that caused Cavagnari's death was actually a group of Herati soldiers who were owed three months' pay arriving to demand it from the British, whom they had been told were now in charge of the country.[163] Continuing the theme of the difficulty of communication over long distances, the Indian Government did not receive word of trouble in Afghanistan until after Cavagnari was already dead.[164] Like Fremont-Barnes, Morgan neglects to consider the differences between the East India Company and Government of India in his critiques of their choices of Amir. The headstrong and expansionist East India Company chose an Amir who would be loyal to their cause regardless of whether the Afghans liked him or not. This failure to acknowledge the opinions of the people they were attempting to rule is the exact same attitude that would lead to the fall of the East India Company in 1857. The Government of India, however, who were made cautious and more willing to compromise by the experience of the Mutiny, selected an Amir who, while still a puppet ruler, was at least palatable to his people, the son of the previous Amir rather than an exiled enemy of his. Their mistake was believing that doing this would cause the Afghans to accept being occupied by a foreign power, which was simply never going to happen, especially so soon after the disastrous first occupation. While both the East India Company and the Government of India made major mistakes in their handling of their occupation of Afghanistan, the Government of India's mistakes were more egregious as they

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[160] G. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 180.
[161] Letter from Lytton, F.P Haynes, A.J. Arbuthnot, A. Clarke, J. Strachey, E.B. Johnson, W. Stokes, A.R. Thompson to Viscount Cranbrook, 7 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/1, pp. 3-4.
[162] Letter from L. Griffin, (Chief Political Officer), to D.M. Stewart (Commander of forces in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan), 4 August 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/3/44, p. 12.
[163]Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* pp. 115-116.
[164] Account of the Anglo-Afghan War 1879-1880 compiled by Major Milner, sent to Lord Roberts 28 September 1904, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/1, p. 28.

had the example of the First Afghan war to look back on. However, the Government of India would learn from their mistakes in the second phase of the war.

Responding to Rebellion

The East India Company's response to their loss of Kabul was confused and chaotic. Elphinstone made the decision for all British and Indian soldiers and their families to withdraw from Afghanistan immediately.[165] One possible reason for this was that Afghanistan had quickly become a less important strategic location after relations between Britain and Russia had become less strained, after the Oriental Crisis of 1840. This was due to a rebellion in Egypt by a close French ally which led to Britain and Russia collaborating against the French, though they never went to war. The British ambassador, Lord Clarincade, had plans to end the 'Great Game' once and for all, but the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, rejected Russia's offer to mark out clear spheres of influence for Britain and Russia in Asia. Palmerston claimed that Britain had the advantage in the Game and could use continued conflict in Asia to draw Russia away from their interests in Europe.[166] Despite this however, relations between Britain and Russia in Asia briefly became much less contentious at around the time that the First Afghan War was ending. Knowing this, the Company could have decided that holding Afghanistan was no longer necessary, not knowing that tensions would heighten again shortly afterward.

Regardless of the reason, Elphinstone's retreat was very poorly conceived. With only 4500 soldiers, he had the task of escorting over 12000 camp followers, mostly Indians, and including Afghan women who were afraid that they would be killed in 'honour killings' if they remained behind, having slept with some of the British soldiers.[167] Lawrence, who was with Elphinstone during the retreat, stated that the retreat was 'clearly avoidable, but which once commenced could not by scarcely any human means have turned out otherwise than utterly disastrous.'[168] Akbar Khan had offered Elphinstone safe conduct, but various Afghan tribes repeatedly ambushed his army as they fled, and the retreat soon turned into a slaughter. Furthermore, he had promised that any sick or wounded men who were left behind in Kabul would be treated well, only for his men to immediately kill them and then climb onto the walls of the city and

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[165] P.A. Macrory, *Retreat from Kabul: The Catastrophic British Defeat in Afghanistan, 1842* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2002), p. 203.
[166] M. Yapp, 'British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India' *Modern Asian Studies*, Volume 21, No. 4, (1987), pp. 659-660.
[167] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 29.
[168] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 164.

start firing upon the retreating army before they were even out of sight of the city.[169] Furthermore, according to Lady Sale, before the retreat, Taj Mohammed Khan had warned that Akbar Khan was planning to betray and annihilate Elphinstone's army.[170] Despite being immediately double-crossed, Elphinstone would somehow continue to believe that Akbar Khan was his ally for the duration of the retreat, blaming the tribal leaders for the attacks and believing that Akbar Khan would fight them off and escort his army safely out of Afghanistan, as he had promised.[171] Lawrence had urged Elphinstone not to retreat in this manner, believing that, due to the snow slowing them down, the need to protect the civilians, and the inevitability of constant attacks from the Afghans as they fled, this would inevitably lead to their destruction. Macnaghten had also expressed similar sentiments before his death, but Elphinstone ignored the warnings.[172]

There have been debates among historians about the culpability of Elphinstone in the failure of the defence of Kabul and the chaos of the retreat. Most agree that Elphinstone's age and illness rendered him incapable of effective leadership, with Hopkirk being one of the most prominent to do so.[173] However, some have presented a more nuanced view, such as Meyer and Brysac, who argue that the structure and procedures of the Indian army are to blame for preventing anyone from overruling Elphinstone.[174] David is more charitable towards Elphinstone, pointing out that the location of the defensive cantonment the soldiers were initially stationed at, which was very poorly defensible, was decided by his predecessor, General Cotton.[175] He points out that Elphinstone repeatedly attempted to have this changed but was overruled by Auckland, who didn't want the expense, and that he was declared medically unfit for command on August 6, but by the time this information reached Auckland for his removal to be approved, it was too late to prevent the disaster.[176] While Lawrence's account of the retreat certainly does not paint Elphinstone in a good light, it should be noted that he was very loyal to Macnaghten and could therefore have been predisposed to blame someone else. However, Lady Sale, who had no such loyalties, was also very critical of

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[169] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 366.
[170] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan, 1841-42*, p. 187.
[171] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, p. 372.
[172] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 102-103.
[173] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, p. 257
[174] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India*, pp. 97-98
[175] David, *Victoria's Wars,* p. 70.
[176] Ibid, p. 44.

Elphinstone.[177] She does, however, acknowledge that Elphinstone was aware of his declining mental faculties and attempted to have himself replaced when it became clear that there would be danger.[178] Whatever the case, it is clear that Elphinstone was placed in a position that he was not suited for in his present state, as his medical report shows, demonstrating the East India Company's unpreparedness for the Afghans to rebel.

As previously mentioned, the Oriental Crisis had cooled the tensions between Britain and Russia, and the newly elected British Government saw no more need for Afghanistan. This was Sir Robert Peel's Conservative Government, but this would not be the most important leadership change for the East India Company that year. Lord Auckland, the Governor-General and leader of the East India Company in India, suffered a stroke and was replaced by Lord Ellenborough. Though Ellenborough was appointed by the Court of Directors, not Peel, he was aligned with him politically and arrived in India determined to make peace, in stark contrast to Auckland, who had maintained a belligerent stance towards Afghanistan which had heavily contributed to the outbreak of war. Ellenborough spoke of his friendship with Peel in a speech to his contemporaries shortly before leaving for India in 1841, crediting him with helping him reach such a high position, and explicitly stating that his goal was 'to restore peace to Asia'.[179] Another motivation for the Company to withdraw could have been financial, as the minutes of a meeting of the Company's Court of Directors from April 1842 reported that, while before the expedition into Afghanistan the finances of India had been very prosperous, there was now a serious annual deficit.[180]

As such, the East India Company was forced to withdraw, placing Elphinstone in an impossible position. This demonstrates the importance of the distances involved in the wider British Empire, and the reason why both the East India Company and Government of India were left to make their own decisions with limited input from the London government most of the time. The new Government, being far away from India, could not have known the severity of the situation in which they had now placed the Company army. Though Ellenborough did travel to India to take up his new post, he was a new arrival who did not have the same knowledge of the situation as Auckland did, and he was sent with explicit orders from Peel to make peace, in one of the very rare occasions that the Governor-General was not left to his own devices. In

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[177] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, p. 221
[178] Ibid, p. 79.
[179] Ellenborough, Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period. Edited by Lord Colchester*, (London: R. Bentley and son, 1874), pp. 169-170.
[180] Secret Minutes of the Court of Directors, 6 April 1839, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/1/2, p. 159.

fact, Ellenborough was eventually recalled in 1844 specifically because the Court of Directors could not control his policies.[181] Their explanation of their reasoning stated that Ellenborough had made clear his intention to 'act, so long as he continued to hold office in India, upon his own conviction, without regard to the opinions or orders of the Court.'[182] This is why they only interfered in the management of India when it came to sweeping policy decisions like reducing tensions with Russia and getting out of Afghanistan. It would simply have been impossible for them to have enough information to organise the day-to-day decisions that went into running India quickly enough. This is demonstrated by examples such as the news of the Afghan rebellion and the death of Macnaghten not reaching Britain until after Elphinstone had already begun his retreat from Kabul.[183]

In her journal, Lady Sale, who was with the retreating army, described the many disasters that befell Elphinstone's armies. Sale is very critical of the conduct of Elphinstone and the other British officers, saying at one point 'as usual, every sensible proposition was overruled.'[184] Sale described in great detail the horrors she witnessed, as the column was constantly fired upon by the Afghans as they fled, stating that 'the whole road was covered in men, women and children, all lying down in the snow to die.'[185] Despite the attacks, Elphinstone continued to believe that Akbar Khan would keep to his word and had no control over the tribes despite the evidence otherwise. Lady Sale wrote that Elphinstone's indecisiveness was the cause of his lack of response to the army's changing circumstances, saying that he would constantly change his mind each time he received advice from his officers.[186] Lawrence agreed with this sentiment, saying that even once the army had been reduced to less than 150 men during the final stages of the retreat, Elphinstone and his highest ranking officers had continued to be indecisive about whether or not to surrender, resulting in even more deaths.[187] Even as Akbar Khan moved his troops to occupy the passes in the path of the retreating army, while simultaneously sending a message to Elphinstone telling him to delay his retreat, Elphinstone still believed Akbar Khan's claims that he was his ally. Lady Sale's journal mentioned that she and her family were told that the only reason Akbar Khan wanted them to delay was so that he could send his own troops ahead to clear out the passes for them.[188] Sale is rightly incredulous

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[181] Secret Minutes of the Court of Directors, 9 April 1844, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/1/2, p. 194.
[182] Ibid, p. 195
[183] David, *Victoria's Wars*, p. 67.
[184] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, p. 221
[185] Ibid, p. 223
[186] Ibid, p. 84.
[187] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 165-166.
[188] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, p. 231

of the idea, and it seems that this was a common sentiment among the army and its civilian followers, and yet, Elphinstone continued to believe Akbar Khan's reassurances. Lady Sale even reports that, at one point, Akbar Khan approached the retreating army and offered to protect them in exchange for being given three generals as hostages, including Lawrence, and even told Elphinstone to remain where he was in the meantime, an offer which, incredibly, Elphinstone accepted.[189]

The source of this trust seems to be Akbar Khan's insistence that he had no control over the tribes' actions and could only vouch for the conduct of his own men, but if even civilians following the army could see through this deception, Elphinstone certainly should have been able to do so. Lady Sale reported that Akbar Khan was with the enemy forces that attacked them, rather than the attacks being the actions of unrelated Afghan tribesmen.[190] Furthermore, Elphinstone was already aware that Akbar Khan had killed Macnaghten at a supposedly peaceful negotiation. Lawrence had been captured in the same ambush that killed Macnaghten, and after his release was negotiated, he relayed those events to the other officers, including Elphinstone.[191] While in captivity Lawrence had also been told by Sirdar Ameenoollah Khan, who had led the initial rebellion against the Company, that Akbar Khan could not be trusted not to attack the retreating army.[192] Even though Macnaghten had also been planning to betray Akbar Khan, this should have been an indicator that Akbar Khan was not to be trusted, and held a grudge against the Company for their attempt on his life. Lawrence also reports seeing Akbar Khan give commands to men firing upon the Company army.[193]

It should be noted, however, that Elphinstone had been placed in a completely untenable position. With only around 4500 trained soldiers according to Lawrence, protecting over 12000 civilians, on a march through hostile territory, it was inevitable that he would take heavy casualties.[194] The failures of Macnaghten and Burnes to keep the Afghan population under control had essentially doomed Elphinstone's expedition before it even began. That being said, Elphinstone responded to these circumstances in the worst possible way, and his stubborn refusal to accept that Akbar Khan had lied to him made a task that had already been incredibly

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[189] Ibid, p. 236
[190] Ibid, pp. 231-232.
[191] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, pp. 137-138.
[192] Ibid, p. 135.
[193] Ibid, p. 152.
[194] Ibid, p. 143.

difficult basically impossible. The vast majority of the army and their camp followers were slaughtered, and the rest captured, with only a single man, Dr Brydon, reaching the Company-controlled city of Jellalabad which had been their goal.[195] Lawrence wrote that he believed the army could still have been saved if they had occupied the Bala Hissar fortress, which lay along the route of their retreat, and defended it until reinforcements from India arrived, but Elphinstone dismissed this idea as sufficient supplies could not be guaranteed.[196] On the other hand, the true responsibility for the destruction of Elphinstone's army falls on the Company officials who appointed him to the post in the first place.

It was well known at the time that Elphinstone was old and unwell, and the fact that such a man was appointed to the task of escorting 12000 civilians through hostile territory controlled by a man whom the Company had just attempted to assassinate is by itself an indictment of the failure of leadership which plagued the East India Company during this war. In the case of Elphinstone, he was allowed to hold such a high position mainly out of seniority, as he had been far more competent in his youth, and people who had known him back then were shocked to see the state he was in, unable to even walk on his own.[197] Two years earlier in 1840, when he had been appointed to the position of commander of the forces in Afghanistan, it had already been well known that Elphinstone was in ill health to the point that he could not even stand up on some days, had not seen combat in twenty five years, and had no interest in Afghanistan whatsoever and would have rather been anywhere else.[198] In George Lawrence's conversations with Elphinstone, he was told that Elphinstone had repeatedly refused the appointment and had only relented when directly ordered by his friend, Governor-General Lord Auckland, feeling that as a soldier he could not refuse.[199] Lawrence directly blames Auckland for the disaster of the retreat, saying that it was unfair for him to order a man into a command position that he both did not want and was not physically capable of.[200] It should also be considered that in 1840, Afghanistan was considered secured, and Elphinstone would not have been expected to do much. Lawrence reports witnessing the meeting between Elphinstone and his predecessor as chief commander, Sir Willoughby Cotton, in which Cotton said to Elphinstone 'You will have nothing to do here. All is peace.'[201]

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[195] Ibid, p. 167.
[196] Ibid, p. 144.
[197] Dalrymple, *The Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan*, pp. 255-256
[198] Ibid, pp. 255-257
[199] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 56.
[200] Ibid, p. 70.
[201] Ibid, p. 53.

That being said, the fact that command was not given to a healthier and more competent man once the rioting and murders of Company officers began was a severe oversight on Auckland's part and reveals just how much the Company underestimated the Afghans. Even Elphinstone himself was self-aware enough to know that he was unsuited to the position to which he had been appointed, and according to Lady Sale wrote to the Government during the first days of the Afghan uprising to give up his command and transfer power to General Nott from Kandahar.[202] Lawrence corroborates this in his own memoirs, claiming that Elphinstone knew he was ill in both body and mind, and stating the disaster was the fault of Elphinstone's advisors and staff, who took advantage of his diminished mental state.[203] Despite all of this, Elphinstone was left in command, making the disaster inevitable. Of course, despite Akbar Khan's reassurances that he and his army would escort Elphinstone's army to safety, the attacks did not stop, and more and more of Elphinstone's men began to be slaughtered.[204] Though Akbar Khan claimed the attacking tribes were not under his control, he was among the forces that attacked the fleeing soldiers, according to Lawrence.[205]

By January 1842, Akbar Khan sent a letter to Elphinstone offering to take all the women and children as hostages, so that they would not be killed in the oncoming slaughter of the men. Lady Sale was one of those taken, and reports that Akbar Khan had claimed to be doing so because their camp was 'no place for safety of women and children.'[206] To his credit, Akbar Khan did keep his word this time and had the prisoners escorted safely back to Kabul. While the East India Company were willing to pay ransoms for the British women and children, they were not able to do so for Indians, who were all slaughtered with the men along with the Afghan women who had gone with them.[207] When Elphinstone and his officers went to negotiate with Akbar Khan, they were all taken prisoner on the spot. The rest of the army were slaughtered soon afterwards. In the aftermath, the Afghans launched attacks on all of the other Company garrisons in Afghanistan, but those at Kandahar and Jalalabad managed to hold out until reinforcements arrived. However, following the change of government in Britain, the replacement Governor-General Lord Ellenborough was ordered to bring an end to the war quickly.

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[202] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, p. 79.
[203] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 70.
[204] Ibid, p. 149.
[205] Ibid, p. 148.
[206] Sale, *A journal of the disasters in Afghanistan*, 1841-42, p. 245.
[207] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* pp. 29-31.

Ellenborough ordered his officers, Generals William Nott, George Pollock and Robert Sale to lead all of the remaining Company forces out of Afghanistan after inflicting reprisals upon Akbar Khan for the deaths among Elphinstone's army. In a letter to Queen Victoria, Ellenborough explained that his plan would be to retrieve the hostages and weapons taken during the destruction of Elphinstone's army, as well as avenge the death of Macnaghten.[208] By doing so, he reasoned, Britain would still maintain at least some influence over Afghanistan by saving face despite the Company's retreat.[209] East India Company Forces were able to inflict a crushing defeat on Akbar Khan at Jalalabad, but then retreated from Afghanistan entirely instead of following through, as ordered. In addition, Robert Sale was able to rescue his wife and the other hostages who had been taken from Elphinstone's army by Akbar Khan. However, Elphinstone was never recovered, as he had died as a prisoner due to his age and ill health, before the relief force could reach him.[210] His body was returned to Jalalabad, while it was still under the control of the Company and buried in an unmarked grave. With that, Dost Mohammed was re-instated. The East India Company's occupation of Afghanistan was, in the end, a complete failure. The destruction of a Company army at the hands of the supposedly inferior Afghan tribesmen was extremely humiliating for both the Company and the British Government, and the knowledge that the Company could be beaten emboldened those who were opposed to their rule. Furthermore, Dost Mohammed later inadvertently assisted the Government of India in their defence of India by taking Herat from the Persians in 1863, accidentally making Russia's invasion route more difficult.[211] Ironically, Dost Mohammed as Amir was better for British influence in Central Asia than Shah Shuja had been, thus rendering the war even more pointless. A report on the history of Central Asia written by Owen Tudor Burne, a major-general who had been the Secretary to the Viceroy Lord Mayo before Mayo's death, after the removal of the East India Company from power would refer to Dost Mohammed as 'our best friend', and lament that his replacement 'made our name hateful to the Afghans'.[212]

Edward Ingram argued that the 'Great Game' was a British invention, referring to the attempt by Britain to attain supremacy in the Middle East, and that their loss in the First Afghan War

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[208] Ellenborough, Lord Colchester (ed), *History of the Indian Administration of Lord Ellenborough, in his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington. To which is prefixed ... Lord Ellenborough's letters to the Queen during that period. Edited by Lord Colchester*, p. 44.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Fremont Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars,* p. 35.
[211] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 181.
[212] Historical summary of the Central Asian Question by O.T. Burne, 30 April 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 24.

proved that they had failed.[213] He centres all of Britain's strategy in Asia around their success in the Middle East, particularly Afghanistan and Persia, whose borders needed to be delineated in a manner advantageous to them.[214] This seems a little premature. The East India Company's defeat in Afghanistan was a disaster, to be sure, but not an irretrievable one. Far more damning than the loss itself was the complete failure of leadership and strategy which occurred throughout, with Elphinstone and Macnaghten being the main offenders. Furthermore, the Company as a whole displayed a complete lack of understanding of the people that they were intending to rule. A memorandum laid before the Council of India by Robert Home, assistant quarter-master general, summarises the Government of India's opinion on the failures of the First Afghan War. It contends that the Anglo-Indian army won the actual war easily, that the difficulties suffered after that were the result of the overconfidence of Macnaghten, and that the results of those mistakes served to obscure the actual danger of a war in Afghanistan.[215] That this was the attitude of the Government of India at the time should be kept in mind when discussing their response to their own problems in Afghanistan.

The response of the Government of India to setbacks was far more effective and well-planned. General Roberts led the counterattack and was first able to destroy the Afghan army at Charasiab, and then retake control of Kabul two days later.[216] At Charasiab, Roberts utilised a flanking manoeuvre led by Brigadier-General Baker, but his opponents were able to retreat successfully due to a lack of cavalry in a position to pursue them and the sun setting as the retreat was taking place, making pursuit difficult.[217] However, the Afghan forces around Kabul soon dispersed and it seemed that the Afghan morale was broken.[218] Roberts also released a proclamation that all those who fought against the Government would be pardoned if they gave up their arms and returned to their homes, with the exception of those responsible for the death of Cavagnari.[219] Though Mohammad Jan Khan Wardark, a sirdar (meaning general or military leader) who had served in Sher Ali Khan's army, raised 10 000 men in rebellion to

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[213] Ingram, *In Defence of British India: Great Britain in the Middle East, 1775-1842*, p. 7.
[214] Ibid, p. 14.
[215] Chronological table of the events connected with the relations between the British Government and Afghanistan from R. Home, Assistant Quarter-Master General, 10 October 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 224.
[216] M. Barthorp, *Afghan Wars and the North-West Frontier 1839–1947* (London: Cassell, 2002), pp. 77-79.
[217] Account of the Anglo-Afghan War 1879-1880 compiled by Major Milner, sent to Lord Roberts 28 September 1904, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/1, pp. 36-37.
[218] Ibid, p. 43.
[219] Proclamation by Sir F. Roberts, dated Kabul, 26 December 1879, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/1, p. 69.

attack the British at Sherpur, his indecisiveness over whether to continue the siege or target Roberts' force led to his forces being dismantled, as the siege was broken apart due to an attack by Brigadier General Charles Gough.[220] An India Office report from Thomas Wilson, a Major-General and military secretary who had fought in the 1857 Mutiny, details how this battle was not without difficulty, as Roberts was at first forced to retreat due to Mohammad Jan's superior numbers, albeit with only minor casualties.[221]

The Afghans were then able to retake Kabul on 14 December but were only able to hold it for ten days, as Gough arrived with 7000 reinforcements and assisted Roberts in recapturing the city.[222] Yakub Khan, who was suspected of being complicit in the revolt, was deposed in favour of his nephew, Abdur Rahman Khan. A record of the war compiled by the Intelligence Department reveals the Government of India's opinion of Yakub, that he did not aid Cavagnari and was at the very least helpless.[223] A document sent by Viceroy Lytton and the Government of India's Foreign Office explained that Yakub Khan was found to be in violation of the Treaty of Gandamak, and that a new treaty would need to be negotiated.[224] Roberts' proclamation on the 'abdication' of the Amir declared that he had done so of his own free will and urged that all other Afghan authorities assist in the preservation of order, and that they would be rewarded for doing so.[225] Whether Yakub Khan was actually involved in the uprising or whether the British simply used him as a scapegoat to get the deal they wanted is a matter of debate. A telegram from Lepel Griffin, the Chief Political Officer in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan, to Viceroy Lytton reveals the Government of India's opinion on Abdur Rahman Khan. It states that they had intercepted two letters from Abdur Rahman to his family, saying that he was returning to Afghanistan after twelve years living in Russian territory due to feeling that it had fallen into disarray due to bad management and breaking trust with powerful states. Despite the fact that he had been living in Russia, Griffin trusted him as he had been offered troops by the Russians and refused, saying that he would not lead Russians against fellow Muslims.[226]

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[220] J. Duke, *Recollections of the Kabul Campaign: 1879 & 1880* (London: W.H. Allen & Co, 1883), pp. 310-311.
[221] Report by Major-General T.F. Wilson, Military Secretary, India Office, on the Afghan War, 1881, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/2, p. 19.
[222] Ibid, pp. 21-22.
[223] Account of the Anglo-Afghan War 1879-1880 compiled by Major Milner, sent to Lord Roberts 28 September 1904, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/1, p. 2.
[224] Letter from Lytton, F.P Haynes, A.J. Arbuthnot, A. Clarke, J. Strachey, E.B. Johnson, W. Stokes, A.R. Thompson to Viscount Cranbrook, 7 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/1, pp 3-4.
[225] Proclamation by Sir F. Roberts, under instructions from the Viceroy, dated Kabul, 28 October 1879, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/1, p. 68.
[226] Telegram from L. Griffin (Chief Political Officer) to the Viceroy Lytton, 5 April 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/11, p. 5.

Following this, a document was circulated by the Viceroy which reprimanded Griffin for negotiating with Abdur Rahman, citing his desire to lean equally on Russia and England as an issue, even claiming that negotiating with him would actually mean negotiating with Russia.[227] Griffin appears to have gone beyond his brief and offered Abdur Rahman the Amirship and 'a treaty of friendship with the British Government' without consulting his superiors.[228] This is a prime example of the ways in which decisions in India under both the Company and the Government of India were made quickly by a 'man on the spot' without consulting the Government in London or in some cases even the leadership in India. John Galbraith wrote about this phenomenon, arguing that, by the time the Government in Britain learned of policies that had already been implemented in India, it was too late to rescind them, and were forced to accept the results.[229] It is made clear throughout the document that the Viceroy did not trust Abdur Rahman in the slightest, but was willing to allow him to gain control of Afghanistan if it meant that Yakub would not be allowed to reclaim the throne. In a later letter, Griffin attempts to justify himself, claiming that Abdur Rahman had done everything the Government of India asked of him, and had himself been suspicious of their intentions, fearing that the Government of India were planning to assassinate him, and would not have returned to Kabul if he had not first been acknowledged by the British as Amir.[230]

The General in charge of the forces of Kabul, D.M. Stewart, believed that Abdur Rahman was planning to wage holy war against them, and even suggested that Yakub be restored to the throne to prevent this.[231] Another document from the Foreign Department, this time from Lytton's successor Lord Ripon indicates that the Government of India believed that Abdur Rahman's correspondence with Muhammad Jan, a man who had been raising forces against the Government of India, indicated that he was actually against them.[232] In Abdur Rahman's response to the Government of India, he seemed interested in Griffin's offer, but asked several questions, such as whether he would be allowed to retain Kandahar, whether any British forces would remain in Afghanistan, whether he would be required to repel the British

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[227] Minute by the Viceroy Lytton, 19 August 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, pp. 1-2.
[228] Ibid, pp. 3-4.
[229] J. S. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1960), p. 155.
[230] Letter from L. Griffin, (Chief Political Officer), to D.M. Stewart (Commander of forces in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan), 4 August 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/3/44, pp. 1-2.
[231] Letter from D.M. Stewart to the Maquis of Ripon, K.G., 11 June 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, p. 10.
[232] Letter from Ripon, F.P. Haines, J. Strachey, E.B. Johnson, W. Stokes, J. Gibbs, C.U. Aitchison, to the Right Honourable Gentleman the Marquis of Hartington, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, 27 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/38, p. 4.

Empire's enemies for them, and what benefits he would receive from them in return, claiming that he would need to talk these matters over with his chiefs before accepting.[233] It seems clear that Abdur Rahman believed he was in a negotiation, while the Government of India had intended only to inform him that they were planning to withdraw from Afghanistan.

With so many conflicting opinions on this man within the Government of India's hierarchy, it seems strange that he would be the one chosen to ally with and assist in becoming Amir. However, General Roberts sums up the reason Abdur Rahman was chosen in his own correspondence in which he lays out the strategy the Government of India would eventually decide upon. Simply put, Abdur Rahman was the only candidate with enough popular support to unite Afghanistan, and the Government of India needed a strong Afghanistan on its northern border. Roberts felt that Abdur Rahman could be trusted as long as the Government of India did not interfere with his internal affairs, 'the less the Afghans see of us the less they will dislike us.'[234] It should also be noted that shortly before the treaty with Abdur Rahman Khan was formalised, an election victory by the Liberal Party over Benjamin Disraeli's Conservatives back in Britain left Viceroy Lytton without a job. The new Prime Minister, William Gladstone, replaced him with Lord Ripon, who was ordered by the new government to deal with the Afghanistan issue as quickly as possible.[235] During the election Gladstone had harshly criticised Conservative foreign policy and particularly their handling of the Crimean War, supporting Turkey, which Gladstone considered an immoral Government, against Russia.[236] This also contributed to Abdur Rahman's selection as Ripon would not have had time to find another candidate.

This also exposes another difference between the leadership of the East India Company and Government of India. While the East India Company did need to report back to and take orders from the British Government, they were not directly part of it, while the leadership of the Government of India were, and were subject to sudden changes in government in Britain causing their leader to be replaced and their objectives changed. In contrast, Auckland was only replaced by Ellenborough because he had a stroke and was unable to continue. The leadership of the East India Company in India was selected by its Court of Directors, not their British Government overseers, the Board of Control. Under these circumstances, it would be expected that the leadership of the Government of India would be more disorganised due to

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[233] Ibid, p. 3.
[234] Memorandum by F. Roberts, 29 May 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, p. 19.
[235] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 181.
[236] M.A. Fitzsimmons, 'Midlothian: the Triumph and Frustration of the British Liberal Party,' *The Review of Politics,* Vol 22, No 2, (1960), p. 196

often changing, but while examples of disagreements and insubordination do exist, most notably Griffin's actions, its leadership was still far more effective than that of the East India Company, who promoted the likes of Macnaghten, Burnes and Elphinstone to positions that they were unsuited for, then left them with few troops and little support as the rest of the army returned to India, too far away to provide effective aid or even receive reports in time to act on them. The man responsible for these appointments was the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, and indeed a letter from Henry Willock, the former Envoy to Persia and future Chairman of the Court of Directors, to Lord Aberdeen, the Secretary of State, reveals that his reputation was until that point so respected that none within the Company were willing to voice their opposition to his policy in Afghanistan.[237] According to Willock, even the Court of Directors of the Company were not consulted in his decision to replace Dost Mohammed with Shah Shuja.[238] Willock suggested that Auckland was not giving Afghanistan his full attention, being more concerned with reducing the Company's financial expenditure.[239]

Among the documents of the Indian Foreign Department is a letter to the Secretary of State for India, Viscount Cranbrook, sent by a group of officials in the Department including Viceroy Lytton. The letter details the plans for the restructuring of the British and Indian relationship with Afghanistan, explaining that the country had fractured into provinces and that the writers believe that it would be impossible to reunite them under a single ruler.[240] This document was written while the suppression of the remaining resistance was still ongoing, and it is interesting to note that the Foreign Department were concerned that they would never be able to reunite Afghanistan. The document makes it very clear that the Government of India's goals were to 'maintain on our frontier a strong and independent kingdom with a foreign policy exclusively subordinate to British Direction.'[241]

It is clear then, that the British needed Afghanistan to remain united in order to create the strong ally that they needed to help defend against Russia. However, the letter is very pessimistic about the ability of the Government of India to achieve this, stating that the unification of Afghanistan under Dost Mohammed, and later Sher Ali, were anomalies and that

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[237] Memorandum from Sir Henry Willock to Lord Aberdeen, 4 September 1841, Printed copies of letters from Sir Henry Willock to successive British Foreign Secretaries discussing the situation in Persia, The British Library, Mss Eur F126/18, pp. 4-5.
[238] Ibid, p. 5.
[239] Ibid, p. 6.
[240] Letter from Lytton, F. P. Haines, A. J. Arbuthnot, A. Clarke, J. Strachey, B. B. Johnson, W. Stokes, and A. R. Thornton to Viscount Cranbrook (Secretary of State for India), 7 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/2, pp. 1-2.
[241] Ibid, p. 1.

the 'natural' state of Afghanistan was to be divided, even developing plans for what to do with each individual province.[242] In fact, another document from Lytton's government shortly before Abdur Rahman Khan's selection indicates that the Government of India intended to allow the heirs of Sher Ali Khan to have control of an independent Kandahar, and believed that Abdur Rahman Khan would accept Kabul without Herat or Kandahar.[243] Lytton had already made clear the importance of 'promptly recognising and supporting any authority at Cabul (sic) which may offer to treat with us on our own terms.'[244] This supports Johnson's argument that, while Abdur Rahman was not the ideal candidate to rule Afghanistan, he was better for the Government of India than the alternative options of leaving Afghanistan embroiled in a civil war or partitioned into smaller states.[245] Gerald Morgan argues that Lytton was, at this point, possibly the only person who still believed in the idea of Indian supremacy in Central Asia, and that the writing was on the wall that this was never going to happen.[246] This was probably true, but does not necessarily mean that the Government of India had failed in its political objectives. The top priority of the Government of India was the protection of India not the expansion of its borders. Afghanistan itself was only truly important for its strategic position and having Afghanistan as an ally was just as effective in this regard as having direct control over it.

This is an example of the Government of India preferring an 'informal empire' made up of countries that they had influence over, but did not directly control, as opposed to the East India Company's approach of invading and absorbing countries into Company territory. In her book on informal empire, Jessie Reeder describes the East India Company's rule as highly organised, having effective governance over the region, and focusing on territorial expansion rather than informal economic influence, which is ironic, as it started life as a trading company.[247] This also extends to their policy in Afghanistan, an attempt to occupy it the same way they had India and all of the other states that had been absorbed into India over the years they had been in power. However, the East India Company was becoming too large and could not dedicate enough resources to maintain effective control of Afghanistan while still keeping the rest of their territory secure. The Government of India realised this, especially after the

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[242] Ibid, pp. 2-3.
[243] Letter from Lytton, E.B. Johnson, 7 April 1880, The National Archives, CAB.37/1/11, p. 1.
[244] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, The proposed rectification of the Western Frontier of India, 30 January 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 156.
[245] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 149.
[246] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 181.
[247] J. Reeder, *The Forms of Informal Empire: Britain, Latin America, and Nineteenth-Century Literature*, (Baltimore, JHU Press, 2020), p. 8.

shock of the Mutiny of 1857, and chose a different, and in this case more effective tactic, a blend of formal and informal Empire. In his own book on informal empire, Gregory Barton explains that, while the Government of India did continue the formal empire in India itself, they also used economic tactics to maintain indirect control over the surrounding countries such as Afghanistan, paying the Amir directly and supplying the best rifles from England to maintain his support.[248] By doing so, they were able to avoid much of the racial, religious and cultural tensions that proved so destructive during the 1857 Mutiny.[249]

Prior to the treaty with Abdur Rahman, General D.M. Stewart, commander of the Government of India's forces in Kabul, claimed in a letter that Abdur Rahman would not accept a deal with the British unless all of the lands once ruled by Sher Ali were turned over to him, and was so concerned about this that he even suggested restoring Yakub Khan to the throne as a puppet ruler.[250] Indeed, Ripon reported that in Abdur Rahman's response to Griffin's offer of an alliance, he specifically asked whether Kandahar would be included 'as of old', in his kingdom, indicating that it was a high priority of his.[251] A confidential message from Louis Mallet (sometimes misspelled as Mullet or Mulet in official documents), the Under-Secretary of State for India, to the Marquis of Salisbury indicates that the Government of India were planning to send influential Afghans, in this case, Hussein Khan, an influential and well-known Afghan according to Mallet, to communicate to the various Afghan chiefs that the Muslim religion needed protection from Russia that only England could provide, or it would be wiped out.[252] This was no doubt intended to assist in the unification of Afghanistan and was a clever move, as religion was very important to the Afghan people at the time, as Islam was key to Afghan identity. As religion had played such a large role in the Mutiny of 1857, it makes sense that the Government of India would be careful to place themselves on the side of protecting local religions, rather than being perceived as being against them as the East India Company were.

Yakub's brother, Ayub, who was passed over for rule, rose up in revolt, but was crushed by Roberts at the Battle of Kandahar. A memorandum written by the new Viceroy Ripon describes these events. In terms of the battle itself, it is shown that the Government of India were

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[248] G. Barton, *Informal Empire and the Rise of One World Culture*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), p. 89.
[249] Ibid, p. 87.
[250] Letter from D.M. Stewart to the Maquis of Ripon, K.G., 11 June 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, p. 10.
[251] Letter from Ripon, F.P. Haines, J. Strachey, E.B. Johnson, W. Stokes, J. Gibbs, C.U. Aitchison, to the Right Honourable Gentleman the Marquis of Hartington, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, 27 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/38, p. 3.
[252] Letter from Mr Mulet (sic) to the Marquis of Salisbury, 8 January 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/1/3, p. 1

initially caught off guard by the attack, and that they feared that retreating and allowing Ayub to pass by Ghazni, they would allow him to win a propaganda victory, announcing to the other tribes that he had caused a British army to flee.[253] With Afghanistan's leadership in the disorganised, fractured state that it was in, this was a legitimate concern and could have put Abdur Rahman's Amirship in jeopardy. Had the other tribes sided with Ayub, it would have been a disaster for the Government of India, who would now have had a hostile Amir on their most important defensive border. The Russians were also aware of the implications of this, as an extract from the *Novoye Vremya*, a Russian Government-supporting newspaper, procured by Robert Michell, an expert on Russia and translator at the India Office, said that the quarrels between Abdur Rahman Khan and Ayub Khan would continue unless Russian pressure were brought to bear on both.[254] Michell also noted an extract from the *St Petersburg Gazette* which said that Ayub Khan's march from Herat to Khandahar demonstrated that a European invasion of India was feasible if Kandahar was left in the hands of the Afghans.[255]

In Ripon's memorandum, it is indicated that many Ghazis joined Ayub in his attack, indicating that the unrest and division throughout Afghanistan had not been fully quelled by Abdur Rahman's appointment to the Amirship.[256] Ghazi is an Arabic term for a military leader. It is clear that the hatred of the British by several prominent Afghan tribes was unlikely to die down, to the point that that hate was transferred to Britain's chosen Amir, despite Abdur Rahman's dedication to keeping Afghanistan as free from foreign influence as possible, the very ideology these same tribes espoused. This makes it even more clear that neither the East India Company nor the Government of India would have ever been able to maintain control of Afghanistan long-term, and that the Government of India's decision to withdraw and form an alliance with Afghanistan instead was the rational one. However, this strategy would fail if Ayub became the Amir. As a result, the Government of India attacked his army before they were ready, resulting in the defeat of General Burrows and his troops.[257] Thomas Wilson wrote that Burrows was telegraphed to act according to his own judgement, but that it was a standing order from the Government that Ayub's army not be allowed to march beyond the

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[253] Ripon, Memorandum on the course of Events connected with Ayub Khan's invasion of Southern Afghanistan, 31 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/39, p. 3.
[254] Extract from the *Novoye Vremya* of 29 August 1880, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 55 (16 Aug-15 Sep 1880), The National Archives, FO 65/1103, p. 352.
[255] Extract from the *St Petersburg Gazette* of 26 August 1880, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 55 (16 Aug-15 Sep 1880), The National Archives, FO 65/1103, p. 259.
[256] Ripon, Memorandum on the course of Events connected with Ayub Khan's invasion of Southern Afghanistan, 31 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/39, p. 2.
[257] Ibid, p. 3.

fortress of Ghazni.[258] His report attributes Burrows' defeat to the superiority of Ayub's artillery and the loss of morale of Burrows' cavalry, due to the heavy bombardment they had already suffered from the artillery.[259]

Griffin notes in his letter to Lieutenant-General Stewart that, if the Government of India had waited to recognise Abdur Rahman as Amir, and Ayub's victory had happened before they had had the chance to do so, it could have prevented Abdur Rahman from becoming Amir at all.[260] However, it should be noted that this could be self-serving on Griffin's part, as he had negotiated with Abdur Rahman against orders, while Stewart had been opposed to supporting him. He also states that, when he met with Abdur Rahman to negotiate after this battle, the leaders of the tribes were growing restless and were ready to defect to Ayub, which Griffin attributes to the defeat of Burrows, stating that it had put Abdur Rahman in a weak position.[261] However, when Roberts arrived, he was able to defeat Ayub with his far more experienced troops, a complete success with Ayub's army dispersed and their artillery captured, according to India Office reports.[262] It should also be noted that Roberts was suffering from a severe fever at the beginning of the battle, and had to be carried part of the way to the battlefield.[263] This crucial victory was a show of strength which allowed Abdur Rahman to solidify his position with the tribes, while also demonstrating to the Afghans that they would not be able to defeat the British Indian army in a pitched battle.

With Ayub decisively defeated, Abdur Rahman's political position was secured, as there were no other viable claimants for the Amirship available. With this, the Government of India were able to sign a new treaty with Abdur Rahman Khan, ceding all territories back to Afghanistan which had been ceded in the initial Treaty of Gandamark. Even Kandahar was reverted back to Afghanistan, after Lytton had fought so hard to keep it as Britain's one outpost in Afghanistan, as Ripon simply wanted to get the treaty done and leave.[264] This time, the Government of India learned from their mistakes and those of the East India Company, and took control of Afghan's

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[258] Report by Major-General T.F. Wilson, Military Secretary, India Office, on the Afghan War, 1881, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/2, pp. 34-35.
[259] Report by Major-General T.F. Wilson, Military Secretary, India Office, on the Afghan War, 1881, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/2, pp. 36-37.
[260] Letter from L. Griffin, (Chief Political Officer), to D.M. Stewart (Commander of forces in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan), 4 August 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/3/44, p. 2.
[261] Ibid, p. 4.
[262] Report by Major-General T.F. Wilson, Military Secretary, India Office, on the Afghan War, 1881, The Roberts Papers, The National Army Museum, 7101-23-158/2, p. 39.
[263] H.E. Raugh, *The Victorians at War, 1815-1914, An Encyclopaedia of British Military History*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2004), p. 198.
[264] Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895*, p. 181.

foreign policy only, leaving Abdur Rahman Khan to govern alone otherwise, thus completing their objective of having a friendly buffer state between India and Russia, without needing to deal with the problems of occupying Afghanistan with British soldiers. It was clear that the 'informal empire' strategy worked far better, at least in the case of a nation like Afghanistan, whose people were too proud and traditionalist to accept foreign rule. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's argument that the most common political technique of British expansion during the 1800s was the treaty of free trade and friendship made with or imposed upon a weaker state, is partially supported and partially contradicted by the example of the Afghan Wars.[265] The Second Afghan War ended in an example of the exact kind of policy they were talking about, though a war was fought first before such a treaty could be signed. The First Afghan War, however, serves as an example of an attempt at creating formal empire, or direct rule, which they argue was rare during this time.[266] In India's Foreign Secretary, Alfred Lyall's, letter to Abdur Rahman offering him the Amirship, the Government of India offered to have their military assist him with any foreign interference in Afghanistan, 'provided that Your Highness follows unreservedly the advice of the British Government in regard to your external relations.'[267] Roberts summed up this policy well when he suggested in a Memorandum of May 1880 that 'Should Russia in future years attempt to conquer Afghanistan, or invade India through it, we should have a better chance of attaching the Afghans to our interests if we avoid all interference with them in the meantime.'[268]

It should be noted that the Government of India had already decided to withdraw from Afghanistan regardless of the outcome of their negotiations with Abdur Rahman, as they had realised that attempting to hold Afghanistan themselves with a hostile populace was a waste of time and resources, would only get more of their officials killed in riots and result in more military conflict that the Government of India no longer desired.[269] Unlike the East India Company, the Government of India had successfully removed the Afghan leader that Russia had been negotiating with permanently, such that Russia would in all likelihood have been stymied even if Abdur Rahman had not allied with them. Crucially, Sher Ali Khan had died before the end of the war. Whereas after the First Afghan War, Dost Mohammed was able to

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[265] J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' *The Economic History Review, Vol. 6, No. 1* (1953), p. 11.
[266] Ibid, p. 12.
[267] Letter from A.C. Lyall, to His Highness Sidar Abdul Rahman Khan, Amir of Kabul, 20 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB.37/2/36, p. 4.
[268] Memorandum by F. Roberts, 29 May 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/27, p. 19.
[269] Letter from A.C. Lyall (Secretary to the Government of India) to D.M. Stewart (Commander of forces in Northern and Eastern Afghanistan), 20 July 1880, The National Archives, CAB 37/2/36, pp. 1-2.

simply reclaim his role as Amir after the Company left, the Government of India had a succession crisis to take advantage of. Nonetheless their alliance with Abdur Rahman, unstable though it may have been, was a clever move on the part of the Government of India, as by doing so they could ensure that Russia could not take advantage of the succession crisis themselves and develop their own sphere of influence in Afghanistan.

It is difficult to give them too much credit, however, considering how chaotic the negotiations were, and the fact that they did not originally intend to ask for an alliance at all, and would have retreated without one if not for Griffin acting on his own, against orders. Still, once the negotiations had actually begun, the Government of India were able to get exactly what they wanted; a strong ruler to unite Afghanistan and serve as a strong ally on the Northern border. The Government of India's choice of Amir proved fortuitous, and Abdur Rahman Khan became known as the Iron Amir due to the iron grip he consolidated over all of Afghanistan, brutally supressing all resistance. In the end, the Government of India needn't have worried about Abdur Rahman's loyalties. The possibility that the Afghans would see any ruler backed by the Government of India as similar to Shah Shuja had been raised, but as Lytton had once pointed out, when the Company installed Shah Shuja, they also deposed one of the most popular Amirs in Afghan history, Dost Mohammed.[270] No further trouble occurred between British India and Afghanistan during Abdur Rahman's reign. Russia was also effectively kept out of Afghan affairs during this time, as Abdur Rahman's main policy was to keep powerful foreign nations out of Afghanistan, as he knew that that would be the only stance his people would accept. This meant keeping the British out, too, but this did not matter to them, as long as Russia was denied Afghanistan as a possible invasion route to India, they had accomplished their objectives.

This success is exemplified by the events of the Panjdeh incident in 1885. Though this event falls outside the timescale of this thesis, it is important to at least touch on as it was a direct consequence of the Government of India's actions in the Second Afghan War. The Panjdeh Incident was the only attempt by Russia to interfere in Afghanistan during Abdur Rahman's reign, in which they captured a border fort, killing 600 Afghans in the process. Though Britain was prepared to go to war over the issue, Abdur Rahman, not wanting any more foreign intervention in his country, defused the situation by brushing it off as a border dispute. Britain and Russia were then able to negotiate allowing the Russians to keep Panjdeh but lose the

[270] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, The proposed rectification of the Western Frontier of India, 30 January 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 155.

other territory they had gained, leaving the border roughly where it was. A confidential report from Francis Bertie, assistant undersecretary in the Foreign Office indicates that Abdur Rahman was indifferent to the retention of Panjdeh but desperately wanted to keep the passes of Zulfikar, Gulran, and Maruchak, which the Russians had also taken, due to their strategic value.[271] However, another document written by the new Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, does indicate that at one point, Abdur Rahman did consider the attack a 'stain upon his military honour' and wanted to retaliate.[272]

The Viceroy at the time, Lord Dufferin, who had replaced Ripon the year before, criticises Ripon in one document, complaining of the difficulty of aiding in the defence of Afghanistan as the treaty that Ripon signed with Abdur Rahman required.[273] He complains that its borders had too few defensible locations, its distance was too far from the Government of India's military base, and its leadership was fractured, due to the many conflicting tribes that had to be appeased.[274] Dufferin did not favour the 'buffer' strategy that the Government of India were using with Afghanistan, disliked working with Abdur Rahman, whom he considered arrogant, and had a distrust of Afghans as a whole, but also stated that he believed that the Government of India should continue to carry out the 'buffer' strategy until it failed, which he did not feel was certain to happen.[275] He also admits that Abdur Rahman is a good administrator despite his personal dislike of him. At the end of the letter, he stated that the Government of India have 'everything to gain and nothing to lose' through attempting to continue their alliance with the Afghans, and believed that this policy should be continued until such a time as it became obvious that it has failed.[276] This provides insight into how the leadership of the Government of India felt about their alliance with the Afghans at the time, and its chances of success. In the end, cooler heads prevailed, and the dispute with the Russians was settled peacefully.[277] This commitment to preventing any foreign powers from battling in Afghanistan

[271] Memorandum from F.L. Bertie to the Cabinet Office, 18 June 1885, The National Archives, CAB 37/15/32, p. 1.
[272] Confidential letter from the Viceroy to the Cabinet Office, 14 April 1885, The National Archives, CAB 37/15/25, p. 1.
[273] Extract from letter from Lord Dufferin to the Cabinet Office, 30 July 1885, The National Archives, CAB 37/16/46, p. 1.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Letter from T.G. Grosvenor to the Maquis of Salisbury, 21 September 1885, Confidential (5171.) Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Asia (in continuation of Confidential Paper No. 5140), The National Archives, FO 539/27, p. 157.

is characteristic of Abdur Rahman's reign and is exactly the reason that he was a good choice of Amir for the Government of India's purposes.

Conclusion: How the Afghan Wars encapsulate the Great Game

When comparing the effectiveness of the East India Company and the Government of India regarding the Afghan Wars, it is important to keep in mind what, exactly, the objectives of the wars were. Both wars were started as a reaction to perceived Russian encroachment on Afghanistan, and the objective was never really to conquer Afghanistan, though successfully doing so would have been one possible method of achieving their true aims. Instead, the only objective that both organisations had in the Afghan Wars was to secure India's northern border against possible Russian aggression. Invading Afghanistan was simply a means to an end, as it was the best possible route for the Russians to invade, and therefore, neither organisation could afford to have Afghanistan make any kind of alliance with Russia. With that in mind, it is clear that the Government of India was far more effective in the Second Afghan War than the East India Company was in the First. While both organisations enjoyed great success in the opening battles of their respective wars and quickly took control of the country, both also suffered great setbacks when it came to actually ruling and maintaining that country. What sets them apart is the way they reacted to those setbacks. The East India Company failed to adequately understand the danger that they faced in occupying a country with a population hostile to them, with Burnes seemingly doing everything he possibly could to anger the Afghans and getting murdered for it, Macnaghten carrying out a failed assassination on Akbar Khan and being killed by him in return, and Elphinstone getting his entire army either killed or captured by stubbornly refusing to believe that Akbar Khan was his enemy. Furthermore, Dost Mohammed Khan, the very man who the Company had invaded Afghanistan to oust, simply returned to retake his throne the moment they left. It was only timing that saved this incident from becoming a complete disaster, with the Oriental Crisis of 1840 causing tensions between Britain and Russia to cool at the same time the war was happening. As a result, the Company did not lose much due to their defeat in Afghanistan, but nor did they gain anything, rendering the entire incident a waste of lives and resources.

By contrast, despite initially falling into some of the same traps the East India Company did, the Government of India ended the Second Afghan War having accomplished almost all of their objectives. While it is true that the Government of India were forced to withdraw from Afghanistan, as the Company had previously, they left behind a stable ally in Abdur Rahman Khan, who would successfully guard the border for the remainder of his reign. However, it should be noted that the Government of India came very close to failing on multiple occasions, and their victory was not as effortless as it would have seemed on the surface at the time. The

documents from the Foreign Office reveal that the Government of India almost failed to secure their alliance with Abdur Rahman Khan due to distrust, which was only prevented by the actions of Chief Political Officer Lepel Griffin acting unilaterally against the advice of his colleagues. Later, the Government of India's panic in attempting to supress Ayub Khan's revolt before it could truly begin caused Ayub to win the very propaganda victory that they had been trying to prevent.

However, thanks to the intervention of General Roberts, the Government of India were able to claim victory and secure Abdur Rahman Khan's position as Amir. This shows a stark contrast in the quality of leadership in the armies of the two organisations, with the generals of the Government of India appearing far more competent, certainly by comparison to the East India Company. The more cautious Government of India, born out of the ashes of 1857, knew when to cut their losses and accomplish their true objective, understanding that having Afghanistan as a strong ally would be even more desirable for their cause than having control of their territory directly. Another important difference in the approaches of the Company and the Government of India was their choice of Amir. The Company chose the deeply unpopular Shah Shuja, simply because he was a former Amir who had been exiled and had been supported by the Company in the past, and they believed it would be easier to have him reinstalled. Their failure to understand the public opinion in their new territory came back to haunt them when it became clear that the majority of Afghans despised Shuja, and that he was blissfully unaware of that fact. By contrast, the Government of India's choice, Abdur Rahman Khan, while controversial, had the strength and intelligence to ensure that the country would fall in line behind him. Even if the Company had chosen to use the same strategy as the Government of India, they would not have been successful with Shuja in charge, as he was in all likelihood going to be overthrown by his own people without Company military support. By contrast, Abdur Rahman had a strong enough grip on power that the Government of India could safely withdraw their military from the country and leave governing to him. By doing so the Government of India were able to gain far more success for far less resources out of the Second Afghan War than the East India Company had from the first. Furthermore, and most importantly, India was far more secure against Russian invasion immediately after the Second Afghan War than it had been immediately following the First.

Chapter Three: Responding to the threat of Persia in the Great Game

Throughout the rivalry between Britain and Russia over control of Asia, many smaller countries found themselves caught up in the conflict. Two, however, had clearly become the most important and influential in the defence of India by 1839. The first of these was Afghanistan, as detailed in the previous chapter. The second, Persia, will be the focus of this chapter. Persia filled a very different role in the conflict than that of Afghanistan. While Afghanistan became a key strategic point that both sides attempted to gain influence over, Persia had already been brought under the influence of Russia by that time and was used as a staging ground for Russia's attempts to gain control of other parts of Central Asia, particularly Afghanistan. As such, it became one of the main obstacles facing both the East India Company and the Government of India as they attempted to lessen Russian influence in the region. In particular, Persia's position in relation to the Afghan city of Herat left the city in danger on numerous occasions.

In keeping with the Afghan Wars, the East India Company and Government of India took very different approaches to the threat of Persia. This should not be surprising, as the primary threat that Persia posed was its presence as a Russian-influenced nation in close proximity to Afghanistan, and particularly Herat, which presented the best invasion route into India. The East India Company dealt with multiple incursions on Herat by Persia, conducted with Russian support. This chapter will argue that the Company dealt with these incursions primarily by putting military pressure on Persia, including sending advisors to Herat and sending their armies to threaten invasion if Herat should fall. By doing so they were able to keep Herat out of Persian hands, however Persia remained a threat until the end of the East India Company's tenure, and the relationship between the two never improved. After the Government of India came under the direct control of the British Government, their relationship with Persia became less hostile. This chapter will argue that the Government of India took advantage of the worsening relationship between Russia and Persia to turn Persia from an enemy into a neutral third party. The purpose of this chapter is to compare and contrast these two approaches and determine whether by maintaining a less hostile relationship with Persia the Government of India made India more secure than it had been under the East India Company.

How does Persia fit into the historiography of the Great Game?

The study of the relationship of both the East India Company and the Government of India with Persia has been addressed in many of the historical works regarding the Great Game. Just

as with all other aspects of the Game, however, the contrast between the two organisations has rarely been explored. In terms of works which focus specifically on Persia, Antony Wynn's *Persia in the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy*, focuses on the life of Sir Percy Sykes, an officer of the Government of India who spent much time cultivating diplomatic relations in Persia during the time of the Great Game.[1] However, as the events of this book took place from 1891 onwards, after the time period covered by this thesis, and only address the actions of the Government of India, it is not particularly useful for the thesis' purposes. A more useful book focusing on Persia in the Great Game is Barbara English's *John Company's Last War,* which focuses on the Persian invasion of Herat in 1856.[2] Although it focuses only on the East India Company's relationship with Persia, it goes into great detail on the events of this crucial incident. English notes that Herat was such a major source of conflict because it was in a location isolated from other cities but also at the crossroads of the major roads from Russia, India, Persia and Afghanistan, leaving it simultaneously vulnerable and strategically important, having been devastated and rebuilt seven times between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.[3] She argues that although Britain, Russia, India and Persia all fought for the city, very little was actually known about the place.[4] She argues that the British preoccupation with Herat came from the fact that India was only open to invasion on its North-West Frontier.[5] She concludes that the British invasion of Persia that was the response to Persia's invasion of Herat, though successful, was forgotten about in the aftermath of the Mutiny of 1857.[6]

In 1997, Abbas Amanat's book, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896,* covered the reign of Shah Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar during the first phase of his reign between 1848 and 1871.[7] This includes a key period in this thesis including the governmental transition in India after 1857. Of the 1857 Mutiny itself Amanat merely explains that it was treated with great enthusiasm in the court of Persia, and great disappointment when it was suppressed.[8] He suggests that the transition of power from the East India Company to the British Government 'promised a more tolerable approach, less exploitative

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[1] A. Wynn, *Persia in the Great Game: Sir Percy Sykes, Explorer, Consul, Soldier, Spy,* (London: John Murray, 2003), p. 2.
[2] B. English, *John Company's Last War,* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1971), p. 13.
[3] Ibid, pp. 11-12.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid, pp. 12-13.
[6] Ibid, p. 155-156.
[7] A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. xiii.
[8] Ibid, pp. 313-314.

and more committed to good relations with India's neighbouring countries.'[9] This is a rare example in the historiography of a historian acknowledging that the change in government resulted in a change of policy, but as the book is focused on Persia, not Britain or India, Amanat uses this as an explanation for the changes in the Shah's own policies during this time, rather than exploring it in depth.[10]

Firuz Kazemzadeh's book, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran,* focuses on the half century preceding the First World War, specifically the years 1864-1914.[11] The book argues that in Britain and Russia's dealings with Persia during this time period, diplomacy was the main instrument of policy, while military force was rarely used despite remaining present as a threat.[12] As the time period covered in the book begins after the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown it does not make a comparison between the policies of the two, but it remains a useful source for this thesis due to its coverage of the Government of India's relationship with Persia in the early years of its rule. More recently, Peter Good's book, *The East India Company in Persia: Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Eighteenth Century*, presented a different perspective on the relationship between the East India Company and Persia. Good argues that for 130 years a mutually beneficial, peaceful, and profitable co-existence existed between Persia and the Company.[13] Good's writing covers the earlier history of the relationship between the Company and Persia, focusing on the first half of the 18th century, with a particular emphasis on the period between 1727 and 1743, which does not fit into the timeline of this thesis, and also does not cover the relationship between the Government of India and Persia. The latest date mentioned in the book is 1802, and as such, it is of limited use to this particular thesis.[14] Good's contention that the East India Company and Persia was a positive one, although this was true in the time period that he covers, this changed after the Russo-Persian War from 1827-29, and by 1835, internal Company correspondence referred to Persia as a threat.[15]

References to Persia appear in a large number of books relating to the Great Game. In Peter Hopkirk's *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* he presents the origins of the

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[9] Ibid, p. 354.
[10] Ibid, pp. 354-355.
[11] F. Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran* (London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. viii.
[12] Ibid.
[13] P. Good, *The East India Company in Persia: Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2022)
[14] Ibid, p. 35.
[15] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Mr Ellis, 25 July 1835, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 7.

Russian influence over Persia and the subsequent attack on Herat as the beginning of a more dangerous phase of the Great Game.[16] He also suggests that the news of Russian meddling in Persia and Herat was an important factor in the increase in anti-Russian sentiment in both Britain and India during the 1830s.[17] He sees the second Persian attempt on Herat as a consequence of the Crimean War, with the Shah being persuaded to do so by Russia in an attempt to take Herat out from under the British while they were distracted in Crimea, though this came to nothing as the Shah did not reach Herat until after the war was over.[18] Hopkirk dedicates much less time to this invasion of Herat than the previous one, simply saying that the Persians were again repelled by the threat of war, though a few military engagements were required this time.[19] He does point out that it was the Government of India, not Britain, which made the declaration of war.[20] Hopkirk writes very little on the relationship between the Government of India and Persia nor does he make any kind of comparison between the two. Evgeny Sergeev's *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* argues that the Great Game did not begin until after the Crimean War, so the first Persian invasion of Herat is not part of its analysis. The second is briefly mentioned as an attempt by Russian General Lieutenant Ivan Blaramberg, not to conquer India itself, but to shake Britain's power there.[21] Sergeev also argues that the assistance of Persia was considered essential by the Russians for their expansion in Asia.[22] He further argues that ensuring that Russia 'would not take advantage of her relations with Persia' to attack Afghanistan was one of the main aims of the Government of India during this time period.[23] As his book focuses almost entirely on the Government of India, it does not contain any particular comparison of the differences between the Government of India and the East India Company's relationships with Persia.

Robert Johnson's *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* depicts Persia as one of the key areas in which the British intelligence network was based along with Afghanistan and Central Asia.[24] He depicts the first Persian invasion of Herat as an attempt to get Kamran Khan on the throne of Kabul, but points out that Russian troops accompanied the army, and

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[16] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray Press, 1990), p. 164.
[17] Ibid, p. 167.
[18] Ibid, pp. 287-288.
[19] Ibid, pp. 288-289.
[20] Ibid.
[21] E. Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2013) p. 71.
[22] Ibid, p. 85.
[23] Ibid, p. 101.
[24] R. Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 33.

that there was a widespread belief that Herat was 'the key to India'.[25] Like Hopkirk, Johnson only briefly touches on the events of the second invasion of Herat in 1856.[26] Of the Government of India's relationship with Persia, Johnson points out that , after Persia accepted a delegation from the Tekke-Turcoman tribes, a Russian army seized a Persian village as a warning in 1877, leading to an increase in aggression from both Russia and the Government of India, and that Russia aimed to keep Persia neutral during their war with Turkey later that year for fear that the Government of India would launch an attack through it.[27] He does not, however, address the implications of this, that the relationship between India and Persia had clearly improved since the time of the East India Company, and that Russia now feared that Persia would side with the Government of India. Nor does he make any real comparison between the relationships the company and the Government of India had with Persia. Martin Bayley writes that, while conventional interpretations argue that the fear of the imminent collapse of Herat at the hands of Persia was the main reason for the Company's attack on Afghanistan, the decision makers in India were more focused on other factors like the opening of the Indus River to trade.[28] He does, however, suggest that the Company was also trying to consolidate a unitary order within Afghanistan in order to resist encroaching Persian influence, but that there was also some Anglo-Russian co-operation in Persia which contradicts the perception that the two were constantly engaged in the Great Game.[29] However, his analysis of Persia is limited to the East India Company's interactions with them.

The status of the relationship between India and Persia under the East India Company and the Government of India

By 1839, the East India Company had already clashed with Persia several times. Between 1826 and 1827, Russia and Persia were at war, leading to Russia gaining significant influence over the country. In 1835 Lord Palmerston wrote that the great threat to Persia would come from Russia.[30] Owen Tudor Burne, a major-general who had fought in the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny before becoming Secretary to two Viceroys of India, Lords Mayo and Lytton, wrote that it had been decided by treaty that Britain was to give aid in the defence of Persia in case of war in return for Persian assistance against Afghanistan if they were to invade India, but this treaty

[25] Ibid, pp. 60-62.
[26] Ibid, pp. 91-92.
[27] Ibid, pp. 145-146.
[28] M. J. Bayly, 'Imperial ontological insecurity: Buffer States, International relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878', *European Journal of International Relations,* 18, 2 (2015), p. 824.
[29] Ibid, p. 829.
[30] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Mr Ellis, 25 July 1835, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 7.

was abandoned, using the excuse that Persia had been the aggressor.[31] Because of this, by the 1830s Persia had developed a deep distrust of Britain, and by extension, the East India Company. Prior to this, Persia had been considered neutral, and was seen by the Company as one of its buffer states, which separated India and Russia. As a later Government of India report analysing correspondence from the British Foreign Secretary, Viscount Palmerston, puts it, while initially Britain and Russia agreed on the selection of Mohammed Mirza as ruler of Persia in 1834, by 1838, Russia had 'complete ascendancy over the Shah's mind' and 'the brief understanding between the British and Russian Governments on the subject of Persia became a complete farce'.[32] To make matters worse, Persia's location made it the ideal invasion route for an attack on one of the Company's other most important buffer states, Afghanistan, which itself provided the perfect invasion route for an invasion of India. According to Henry Durand, an officer in the Indian Army under the East India Company who fought in the First Afghan War, by 1836, it was believed that Persia was now the most likely route through which an attack might commence.[33] This lends credence to Peter Hopkirk's argument that Russian meddling in Persia and the threat to Herat was an important factor in the increase in anti-Russian sentiment in India.[34]

John William Kaye, a former officer in the Indian Army who went on to join the Home Civil Service of the East India Company, states that little was done to prevent British influence in Persia from waning until it became clear that India was now threatened, and also suggests that Russia and Persia's mutual animosity with Khiva was the cause of their closer relationship.[35] The Khanate of Khiva was a state centred on the city of the same name, which lay in Central Asia between the territories controlled by Russia and India. It had been a rival of Persia in the past and was also one of the countries that Russia wished to extend its influence into, as they would attempt an invasion in 1840.[36] Russia would go on to successfully annex Khiva in 1873.[37] The city of Herat was an especially vulnerable target, and in 1837, the ruler of Persia, Shah Mohammed Mirza, laid siege to Herat, with the support of Russian consultants. Mirza had

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[31] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 189.
[32] Memorandum to the Secretary of State on Persia, 1 December 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, India Office 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, pp. 234-235.
[33] H. Durand (ed), *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1879), p. 29.
[34] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 167.
[35] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1* (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), p. 155.
[36] Newsletter from the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, 25 January 1840, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 19, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/381, p. 760.
[37] Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 83.

already planned an attack on Herat once in 1833, but had withdrawn after learning of the death of his father.[38] Durand wrote that Herat, despite being part of an ostensibly neutral third party city, was considered by the Governor-General Lord Auckland, the highest ranking official in India to be the western frontier of the Company, because of the city's key strategic location, being the first step in the conquest of Afghanistan, which would have left Persia in a good position for an attack on India.[39] This supports Barbara English's argument that the British preoccupation with Herat was due to India's vulnerability on its north-west frontier.[40]

Further, Kaye refers to it as the 'Gate to India', explaining that it was the only route to India through which a fully equipped army with heavy artillery could be marched, due to the mountainous terrain of every other route.[41] Herat itself, being known as 'the Granary of Central Asia' also supplied all of the resources needed to keep an army well supplied as it marched, making it an even better invasion route.[42] The people of Herat were also divided, it being so close to the border between Persia and Afghanistan, such that while some were loyal to Afghanistan, others would have welcomed the Persian invasion.[43] As a demonstration of this, the brother of Yar Mohammed, the vizier of Herat, fought on the side of the Persians after giving up his own city, Ghorian, to the Persians.[44] All of this combined to make Herat an obvious weak point in India's defences, and with Persia now under Russian influence, it was now ripe for exploitation. This city would become the focus of conflicts between India and Persia for years to come, under both the East India Company and the Government of India, despite not being part of either country.

Significantly, even Dost Mohammed Khan himself might have been inclined to rid himself of Herat and its Shah, Kamran, as in 1836, Viscount Palmerston communicated to John McNeil, Envoy to Persia, intelligence that he had received indicating that Dost Mohammed had been in communication with the Shah of Persia on the subject of the conquest and partition of Shah Kamran's territories.[45] This information, gathered by Henry Ellis, who had been Ambassador to Persia in 1835, from an Afghan nobleman named Hajee Hussein Ali, convinced him that it would be necessary for the Company to enter into some kind of political or financial

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[38] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 157.
[39] Durand (ed), *The First Afghan War and its Causes*, p. 30.
[40] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 12-13.
[41] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 213.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, p. 215.
[44] Ibid, p. 234.
[45] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to Mr McNeil, 23 June 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 19.

agreement with Dost Mohammed in order to counter Persia and Russia's influence.[46] Ellis believed that the present relationship between Britain and Persia made it difficult to intervene in matters between Persia and Afghanistan, but worried that Persia would not oppose the advance of a Russian army through their country.[47] He also says that Afghanistan would be a better ally than Persia, and therefore the occupation of any part of it by Persia would be 'as dangerous as any occurrence in these Countries could possibly be.'[48] He does suggest that Persia would be valuable if the Company could obtain enough influence over its government to control its foreign policy, but does not believe this is likely.[49] Ellis argued that, should the Persian invasion of Herat succeed, it would 'bring Russian influence and intrigue to the banks of the Indus.'[50] Ellis' letters further demonstrate the evidence for Hopkirk's arguments that Russia's intervention in Persia and Herat was a leading cause of the increase in anti-Russian sentiment in India.[51] They also support English's argument that Herat's location on India's north-western frontier was the primary reason for the preoccupation with it by European powers.[52]

As a result of this, McNeil would himself travel to Persia to gather information, while the Governor-General Lord Auckland was authorised to do 'any other measure that may seem desirable to you to counteract Russian influence in that quarter'.[53] This again demonstrates the unusual nature of the East India Company's relationship with the British Government, as even as the Board of Control, the government organisation which oversaw the Company, took direct action in Persia, Auckland was still given leeway to decide for himself the best course of action where the Company's relationship with Afghanistan is concerned. His only instruction was that the relationship between India and Afghanistan must be strengthened, while the details were left up to him to decide, and only 'should you be satisfied from the information received from your own agents on the Frontier, or hereafter from Mr McNeil upon his arrival in Persia, that the time has arrived at which it would be right for you to interfere decidedly in the affairs of

[46] Letter from the Secret Committee to the Governor-General in India, 23 June 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 19.
[47] Letter from H. Ellis to the Governor-General, 15 December 1835, The Enclosures to Secret Letter No. 3, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/126, p. 173.
[48] Ibid, p. 174.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Letter from H. Ellis to the Governor-General, 30 December 1835, The Enclosures to Secret Letter No. 3, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/126, p. 176.
[51] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 167.
[52] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 12-13.
[53] Letter from the Secret Committee to the Governor-General in India, 23 June 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 19.

Afghanistan'.[54] In other words, Auckland was only to intervene if he himself believed it was the right decision to do so based on the information that he, the man actually in India at the time, could gather. Of course, as discussed in the previous chapter, the Company's attempt to do this would later result in the First Afghan War.

By July 1836, Ellis had become convinced that due to the events in Persia, the time at which Russian influence would spread into Afghanistan and the Punjab was soon approaching, especially if Ranjit Singh, leader of the Sikhs in the Punjab, were to die.[55] In September, McNeil would report back from Persia that the Shah had indeed begun to mobilise on Herat, and that the British officers who would customarily accompany the Persian army had been removed.[56] Incidentally, this letter, sent on 12 September, would not arrive until 11 November, demonstrating the problem with communicating over the vast distances between Britain and India.[57] The original dispatch from Ellis about Dost Mohammed's intentions towards Persia and Herat had been sent on 25 February and received by Palmerston on 29 May.[58] All in all, it had taken ten months from the initial gathering of information before McNeil's confirmation to Palmerston that the attack was happening. Further letters from Ellis providing additional information sent in June would not arrive until October, too late to make a difference.[59] To run a country from London, especially one as large as India, in this manner would be utterly unfeasible. This is why Governor-Generals such as Auckland were given so much independence, as they were the ones actually in India and therefore able to react quickly enough to new developments. This brings to mind John Galbraith's argument about the dichotomy between the British Government and East India Company Directors' stated opinions and their actions. Galbraith argues that the British leadership often stated that they believed in the policy of non-expansion in India while also doing nothing to prevent the East India Company from contradicting their statements by expanding its territory.[60] He argues that this was caused by the incredibly slow method of transporting messages to and from India by ship,

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Letter from H. Ellis to the Governor-General, 1 July 1836, The Enclosures to Secret Letter No. 3, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/126, p. 178.
[56] Letter from Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, 12 September 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 19.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Letter from Mr Ellis to Viscount Palmerston, 25 February 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 10.
[59] Letter from Mr Ellis to Viscount Palmerston, 25 June 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 15.
[60] J. Galbraith, 'The "Turbulent Frontier" as a Factor in British Expansion,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1960), p. 151.

which resulted in the necessity of Indian governmental policy being decided in India and not Britain.[61]

The Russian Ambassador, Count Simonich, was blamed for the incident, having supposedly convinced the Persian ruler Shah Mohammed Mirza to launch the invasion, and the Company's suspicion of Russia grew.[62] At the time of the invasion Lord Palmerston asserted that Simonich was responsible, and urged John Lambton, the Earl of Durham, who at the time was Ambassador to Russia, to learn from Count Nesselrode, Russia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, whether he had done this at the behest of the Russian Government.[63] Durham would respond, saying that Nesselrode claimed that Simonich was acting against the instructions of his government, and that Russia opposed Persia's invasion of Herat.[64] Hopkirk argues that it was well known in Terhan that Simonich had done this, despite his protests that he was in fact trying to hold the Shah back.[65] Kaye certainly believed that the invasion was the result of Russian influence, though he further pointed out that, according to the reports of Ellis, Mirza had been planning an invasion of Afghanistan through Herat for a long time, and Russia's influence on him was to insist that it must be done immediately or the chance would be lost.[66] Later, Kaye, the staunch Company loyalist, even suggests that Nesselrode and Simonich may have been telling the truth, pointing out that Simonich had been claiming to have been trying to persuade the Shah not to attack in letters to his own government, where he would have had no reason to lie.[67] Despite that, Kaye still later concludes that the Persian army at Herat was 'moved by Russian diplomacy and directed by Russian skill', so it is clear that he still believed that Russia was significantly involved in the invasion.[68]

Further into the book, he states that 'no sane man ever questions the assertion that Russian diplomats encouraged Mohammed Shah to undertake the expedition against Herat', and goes on to reject the idea that Simonich was acting on his own by arguing that no agent of a government would be so bold as to negotiate such an important deal with another country

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[61] *Ibid,* pp. 151-152.
[62] Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question from Owen Tudor Burne, 30 April 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 22.
[63] Letter from Viscount Palmerston to the Earl of Durham, 16 January 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 6.
[64] Letter from the Earl of Durham to Viscount Palmerston, 24 February 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 6.
[65] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 166.
[66] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 160.
[67] Ibid, p. 162.
[68] Ibid, p. 210.

without explicit orders from his superiors.[69] This is ironic however, as agents of the East India Company did exactly this all the time, including Eldred Pottinger during this very siege of Herat. However, interestingly, in a letter to his superior William Macnaghten, at the time an advisor to Auckland in October 1837, Alexander Burnes, the political agent who would go on to be murdered during the First Afghan War, suggested that the Shah of Persia was justified in his invasion, due to the enslavement of the Shia population of the city by its leadership.[70] However, Burnes further explained that he did not believe Persia had the military strength to do so alone, and that it could only take the city through the assistance of Russia, who he believed to be motivated by a desire to improve their commerce with Turkestan.[71] He concludes that it would be dangerous for Persia to be allowed to gain a foothold in Herat, as if Persian influence were allowed into Afghanistan, Russian influence would soon follow.[72]

Another man who was growing increasingly suspicious of Russian intentions during this time was the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston. Though the Russian Foreign Minister Count Nesselrode insisted time and time again that Simonich had acted alone, and even recalled him from his position, it made no difference, as everyone knew of the influence that Russia had with Mirza.[73] Hopkirk argues that it cannot be known for certain whether Simonich was acting on his government's orders or not, but that it does not matter, as everyone in the British Government and East India Company believed that he was, thus solidifying the belief in their minds that Russia was planning an invasion of India.[74] The siege was a brutal battle, with atrocities committed on both sides, and dragged on far longer than Simonich had led the Shah to believe that it would.[75] The East India Company officer, Eldred Pottinger, was trapped in the city at the time of the siege, and though he was not there on the orders of the Company, he still assisted in the defence of the city for the sake of his own safety. Likewise, the Persians had brought Russian advisors along to the battle, including Simonich. Kaye claimed that Simonich and his men effectively conducted the siege themselves, giving advice, teaching Persian soldiers how to construct more effective siege weapons, and spreading money amongst the soldiers.[76] It should be noted, however, that Kaye, a staunch Company loyalist, may have

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[69] Ibid, pp. 294-295.
[70] Letter from Captain Burnes to Mr Macnaghten, 20 October 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 61.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Letter from Count Nesselrode to Count Pozzi di Borgo, 1 November 1838, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, India Office, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, pp. 235-236.
[74] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 185.
[75] Ibid, pp. 177-179.
[76] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 260.

exaggerated the role of Simonich and his men for his own purposes, especially as at the time that he was writing the book, another attack had been launched on Herat by the Persians, and Kaye was attempting to argue that an alliance with Dost Mohammed was the only way to protect it.[77] Kaye was also not at the battle himself, having heard about it second-hand through Pottinger and McNeil. However, Simonich definitely did stay in the Persian camp during the battle, and other Russian advisors did accompany him. Whatever the extent of the Russian influence over the invasion, Kaye's opinion was not a rare one. The perception in Britain and India was that Russia was responsible for the Persian attack, and that would inform the actions of the Company towards Persia going forward.

The British diplomat and envoy to Persia, John McNeil, was also in the Shah's camp, still trying to convince him to call off the attack. Though these people never actually fought against each other directly, this was the closest the Great Game came to open warfare, unless the Crimean War is counted as part of it. According to Kaye, during the attack the Shah also stated that his campaign was 'not an expedition against Herat, but an expedition against Hindustan' and that other Muslim states should join him in 'the conquest and plunder of India and Turkestan'.[78] This indicates that the Company's fears about Herat being used as a gateway to India were indeed justified, though the Shah could never have actually won a war against India on his own. It was not only through direct force that the Persia invasion threatened the Company, however. On the 23rd of May, in a meeting between the leaders of Herat, it was suggested that they should throw themselves onto the mercy of Russia and acknowledge Herat's dependency on them in order to save themselves.[79] If this had happened, it would have been just as disastrous for the Company as if Persia had taken Herat by force. In either scenario, Russia would have gained an ally right on the doorstep of the 'Gate to India.' Pottinger, still inside the city, attempted to negotiate with Yar Mohammed, arguing that an alliance with Britain would be more advantageous to him than one with Russia, and that such an alliance relied on his not allowing Russian interference in his city.[80] Pottinger, of course, had no actual authority to do this, and was reprimanded by McNeil for doing so, another example of how members of the Company often had to make decisions on the spot and worry about the opinion of the Government later.[81] Indeed, when the Shah told McNeil to order Pottinger to leave the city during a negotiation, McNeil had to reluctantly admit that he could not, because Pottinger was

[77] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3* (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), p. 401.
[78] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 250.
[79] Ibid, p. 261.
[80] Ibid, p. 262.
[81] Ibid, p. 263.

not operating under his orders.[82] Finally, the Shah was threatened with war with Britain should his forces not leave Herat, with the justification that his war was being engaged 'in a spirit of hostility towards British India'.[83]

Demonstrating that, for all his talk about the conquest of India, he was not prepared to go to war with a major imperial power, the Shah backed down. Indeed, he claimed to McNeil that he had never intended to do anything harmful to the interests of Britain in India.[84] Kaye quotes from Pottinger's report on Herat, saying that Mirza could have taken the city on the first day of the siege, if not for the disunity and disorganisation of his army, and adds that the only times in which the army operated as a cohesive whole was when the Russians were directing them.[85] Kaye argues that this is because each of the Sirdars or Generals in the Persian Army operated as independent commanders who each followed their own plan of attack, and were not willing to support each other as each wished to win the glory of taking the city.[86] Of course, it is no surprise that an imperialist like Kaye would say such a thing, and he also attributes the successful defence of Herat to the presence of Pottinger to co-ordinate their forces.[87] To hear Kaye tell it, the battle was basically between Pottinger and Simonich, using the people of Persia and Herat as their proxies. While it is certainly an exaggeration to say that the two were the only deciding factors in the battle, they certainly did have training that the Persians and Heratis did not.

Even decades later during the time of the Government of India, it was commonly believed that the siege of Herat was only won due to 'the energy and ability of Pottinger', as Owen Tudor Burne described.[88] Though Mirza had retreated as soon as the Company threatened military action against him, this incident set the tone for all of the future interactions between the Company, the Government of India and Persia. McNeil would send a report to Palmerston which appeared to contain a conversation between British and Russian diplomats, however, the names of the two parties have been redacted.[89] In this conversation the Russian representative expressed confidence that Persia was now completely under Russian control

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[82] Ibid, p. 267.
[83] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 184.
[84] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 253.
[85] Ibid, p. 281.
[86] Ibid, p. 280.
[87] Ibid, p. 2.
[88] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 190.
[89] Letter from Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, 28 November 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 98.

and that it would be impossible for the British to supplant their position there, while the British representative contended that as the Afghans would be able to defeat the Persians, the Russian position in Persia was unimportant and Afghanistan was the more important territory.[90] McNeil was convinced by this report that it was necessary to risk losing British influence in Persia in order to protect it in Afghanistan.[91] The First Afghan War would begin almost immediately after the end of the siege, and would end poorly for Britain and the Company, so McNeil's confidence would seem premature.

By the time that the Government of India took power in India, the relationship between India and Persia had devolved even further. Just two years earlier in 1856, Persia had launched a second invasion of Herat, but had once again been repelled. In 1858, the year that the new Government of India officially took over, the annual report from Russia's Asian Department to the Russian foreign minister took the stance that Persia could not be counted on as a reliable ally, and prevented them from approaching British territories, but was also essential to Russia's own expansion.[92] This indicates that Russia simultaneously saw Persia as one of the Government of India's 'buffers' against them, but also saw it as essential for their own development in the region. This is interesting because by the time of the Government of India, the idea that Persia could serve as an effective buffer against Russia had long been given up on by the British, the country having been dismissed as lost to Russian influence long ago. By 1856 Charles Murray, the envoy to Persia, was dismissing the Government of Persia as liars and aggressors who could not be trusted.[93] This would change however, as the new Government of India developed their relationship with Persia in a different way than the East India Company.

By the time that the Russians began their expansion into Central Asia in 1864, the Persian Shah Nasir-u-Din had, by launching punitive expeditions against the Turkmen tribes in his territory, diverted them into Khokand, creating instability in that country.[94] In doing so, they left the country vulnerable, and it is believed that this is the reason the Russian expansion began, to ensure that the weakened Khokand would not be annexed by the Government of India or any of the other Asian rulers in the region.[95] The Khanate of Khokand was in modern-day Uzbekistan, and during this period was one of many Central Asian states which existed

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 85.
[93] Letter from C. A. Murray to the Earl of Clarendon, 9 December 1856, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 128, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/490, p. 228.
[94] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 96.
[95] Ibid.

between Russia and India, and became one of Russia's targets for annexation as a result. Meanwhile, Russian diplomat Prince Gorchakov released a statement proclaiming that Russia had no interest in encroaching on Persian territory.[96] On the British side, in 1860 Lord John Russell, former Prime Minister and new Foreign Secretary, singled out Russia's alliance with Persia as an important concern when it came to Russian interference in Asia.[97] On the whole the Government of India began their time in power in a better position than the East India Company had been in in 1839 regarding Persia, for they had inherited the newly formed alliance with Dost Mohammed, making the necessity of defending Herat less critical. This allowed them to take a more subtle approach to Persia, attempting to use diplomacy to convince them to change their allegiances away from Russia, rather than having to constantly defend against attacks from them.

During its manifesto on invading Herat in late 1855, Persia had also expressed its desire to remain neutral in the Crimean War, as it had continued to do throughout that war, despite the fact that its' supposed ally Russia was opposed to Britain in that war, instead blaming the actions of Dost Mohammed Khan for forcing Persia's hand and necessitating the occupation.[98] At the time, Consul Richard Stevens, transmitting the translation of the Manifesto to the Secretary for the Government of India (run at that time by the East India Company), felt that it implied that the British Government were behind Dost Mohammed's actions, and made negative insinuations about Britain overall.[99] However, Persia's neutrality throughout the Crimean War could also be interpreted as a sign that the alliance between Persia and Russia was not as strong as it appeared, something that could be exploited by the Government of India. The Persian Prime Minister further announced to its French, Ottoman and Russian diplomats (all nations also involved in the Crimean War) that its expedition had nothing to do with said war, however, according to Stevens' sources, the Persians' missive to Russia included a provision that the movement could be beneficial to them as it could force the British to withdraw some forces from Crimea.[100] From the beginning of the Crimean War Persia had attempted to bargain with both sides and remain neutral, until 1854 when they signed a secret neutrality treaty with Russia, which prevented them from shipping food, provisions and

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[96] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, p. 11.
[97] Ibid, p. 101.
[98] Translation of Manifesto by the Persian Government on the occupation of Herat, originally published in the Tehran Gazette, 20 December 1855, Affairs of Persia: Papers, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/7, p. 13.
[99] Letter from R.W. Stevens to the Secretary to the Government of India, December 21, 29 December 1855, Affairs of Persia: Papers, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/7, p. 13.
[100] Letter from R.W. Stevens to the Earl of Clarendon, 17 December 1855, Affairs of Persia: Papers, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/7, p. 10.

weapons from Britain to the Ottoman side.[101] Despite being a neutrality treaty this benefitted Russia, and the minister of Azarbaijan, Mirza Sadiq Qa'im Maquam Nuri, feared that if the secret was discovered, Britain, France and the Ottomans would attack them.[102] Further, there were those within Russia, including Nuri, who were more sympathetic towards Britain than Russia.[103] But by 1857, after the failed Persian attack on Herat, the relationship had deteriorated to the point that the Shah was calling for a jihad against Britain, though from a practical standpoint, he knew that he would not be able to do so.[104] It was this rather confused relationship with Persia that the Government of India would inherit.

The East India Company and the defence of Herat

By the time of the First Afghan War, Herat was under the command of a man named Yar Mohammed, who had a poor reputation among the officers of the Company. Officially, Shah Kamran Khan was the ruler of the city, but he was old, weak and had lost most of his power.[105] Yar Mohammed, Kamran's vizier, therefore set the policy. Though Herat was part of Afghanistan, its rulers were often independent from the Amir, and in many instances, at odds with him. Such was the case between Kamran Khan, Yar Mohammed, and Dost Mohammed. At the time, it was considered that the best thing for the Company's interests in the region would be for Dost Mohammed, or some other Afghan ruler, to gain direct control over the city.[106] Of course, the First Afghan War put an end to the idea of an alliance with him, at least for the moment, and made Herat an even more vulnerable weakness, as it was now surrounded by enemies of the Company on all sides. In the previous Persian invasion of Herat, Yar Mohammed had fought on the Afghan side, and extremely brutally at that.[107] Following the battle, tension rose between him and the agents of the Company who had assisted him there, Charles Stoddart and Eldred Pottinger, and it has been alleged that he caused Stoddart's death in a prison in Bukhara by sending a letter to the Amir there describing him as a dangerous spy.[108]

Though Yar Mohammed was officially only the vizier of the city, serving the Prince Kamran Khan, in truth he was the real power behind the throne. According to Alexander Burnes,

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[101] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, p. 254.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, p. 298.
[105] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 216.
[106] Ibid, p. 304.
[107] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 177.
[108] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 25.

Kamran had no ability to command the loyalty of his subjects, and Yar Mohammed was the one with true ability, though he believed that the strength of Herat was compromised by all of its leaderships' 'indulgences' while their subjects went hungry.[109] By 1839, Yar Mohammed had begun to negotiate with his enemies, the Persians, to remove the Company from the city, possibly because of their outlawing of the slave trade which had previously made up much of Herat's economy.[110] However, the cautious Persians decided to warn the Company of this instead, resulting in Major Elliot D'Arcy Todd, another of the Company's political agents, being installed in Herat on a permanent basis, where he remained until 1841, when the Company were forced to withdraw from Afghanistan altogether. J.W. Kaye believed that Yar Mohammed was conspiring with the Persian government to both hand over Herat to him, and to stymie the Company's efforts in the Great Game.[111] Kaye, who had a particular hatred of Yar Mohammed, repeatedly accused him of various betrayals throughout his book. For example, he related how, during the First Afghan War, Alexander Burnes wrote that the Company had placed themselves in a bad position by allying with a 'miscreant' like Yar Mohamed, and that they would have been better served by an alliance with Persia.[112] Burnes also reported to Macnaghten that Yar Mohammed had been in contact with the Shah of Persia and had even invited him to Herat for use as a staging ground for an invasion of the rest of Afghanistan, in exchange for Yar Mohammed being given Herat.[113] In the midst of the Afghan Wars, Governor-General Auckland and Macnaghten decided to bribe him into compliance instead of invading Herat.[114] Kaye also suggests that, during this time Yar Mohammed, angered by the attempts of Pottinger and Stoddart to curb the slave trade in his city, had begun conspiring with Persia and the Sirdars of Khandahar to remove Shah Shuja, the Company's replacement for Dost Mohammed, from the throne of Afghanistan.[115] Kaye argues that Yar Mohammed was essentially trying to play the Company and Persia against each other, as he considered the existence of a British army in Afghanistan even more alarming than a Persian one, and wished to secure the favour of Persia while still receiving British money.[116] He also argues however, that beyond that, his true motive was hatred for the Company and D'Arcy Todd in particular

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[109] Letter from A. Burnes to W. Macnaghten, 10 November 1837, Events and transactions connected with the affairs of our North-Western Frontier, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/134, p. 441.
[110] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 26-27.
[111] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan,* Vol 2 (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), pp. 53-54.
[112] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 425.
[113] Letter from A. Burnes to W. Macnaghten, 16 November 1837, Events and transactions connected with the affairs of our North-Western Frontier, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/134, p. 446.
[114] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, pp. 53-54.
[115] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 449.
[116] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, pp. 50-51.

for their efforts to end slavery.[117] Because of this, Macnaghten became convinced that Shah Shuja needed to conquer Herat for the security of the rest of Afghanistan and India.[118] Of course, this plan would be derailed by the death of Macnaghten and the end of the First Afghan War, with Dost Mohammed, now hostile to the Company, taking the throne once more, as was discussed in the second chapter.

Furthermore, D'Arcy Todd's diplomatic mission would soon leave Herat, frustrated at their lack of progress. During his time as envoy Todd had complained that the state of affairs in Herat was unsatisfactory and that he had not received orders from the Governor-General on what to do about the discovery of Yar Mohammed's treachery.[119] The entire point of the Company's interference in the Persian attack on Herat had been to keep the city out of Persian, and therefore Russian, hands. Now, just a few years later, it seemed that that effort had been for nothing, as their inability to negotiate with Yar Mohammed had led him to instead turn to the very country they had saved him from. While Kaye's accusations of Yar Mohammed are very extreme, as he seems to blame him for everything that has ever gone wrong for the East India Company, the fact remained that he did expel or drive away all of the Company's agents in Herat leaving them in a worse position than they had been in when they had started. After leaving Herat, Todd would lament that 'we have taught Yar Mohamed to be more afraid of us than the Persians.'[120]

Following the First Afghan War, Herat essentially became inaccessible to the Company, another example of their aggressive, expansionist approach backfiring and leaving them in a worse position. Yar Mohammed finally died of natural causes in 1851, and only a year later, Persia successfully annexed the city. At the time of his death, it was reported by Justin Shiel, the Ambassador to Persia from 1844 to 1854, that he was planning to overthrow the new Governor, Syd Mohammed Khan, after having been exiled to Meshed.[121] Shiel anticipated the annexation, warning that Syd Mohammed had offered Herat to the Persians in exchange for protection from this coup.[122] By this time, a new Shah, Nasir-ud-din, had also risen to the throne in Persia. Kaye calls this the completeness of the failure of the policies that led the

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid, p. 67.
[119] Letter from E. D. Todd to L. R. Reid, 9 September 1840, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 26, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/388, p. 11.
[120] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, p. 111.
[121] Letter from Justin Shiel to the Viscount Palmerston, 7 January 1852, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 110, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/472, p. 434.
[122] Ibid.

Company both to interfere in the original invasion of Herat and to the First Afghan War.[123] However, this only lasted a year before another threat of war with Britain caused the Shah to give up all claim to Herat in 1853.[124] Despite these conflicts there was some co-operation with Russia in Persia during this time period, for example, in 1853 Shiel co-operated with his Russian counterpart to dissuade the Shah from taking 40,000 troops to conduct an inspection of some provinces of Azerbijan, which they feared would provoke conflict with Turkey.[125] This lends credence to Martin Bayley's theory that while the Company did desire to keep Persia and Russia out of Afghanistan, they were not so opposed to Russia that they would not work with them in matters that would benefit both.[126] During this time, the Company also began negotiating a closer relationship with Dost Mohammed in the hope that he would take responsibility for the protection of Herat. Herat and its protection were the primary cause of most of the East India Company's interactions with Persia during this time period, and it would be difficult to argue that this was not a failure. Though the Company were able to repel Persia by show of force, that was not particularly important if they were unable to capitalise on those victories.

The Company lost control of the political situation in Herat almost immediately after the siege ended, and so upset Yar Mohammed that he was more willing to ally himself with Persia, the country that had just invaded his territory, than with the East India Company. This failure was not entirely the Company's fault, as Herat was always going to be a particularly difficult city to defend, surrounded as it was by enemies. Yar Mohammed, also, was extremely untrustworthy; even if Kaye's descriptions of him were exaggerations, he still turned on the Company and expelled them from his city almost immediately upon them having rescued him. That being said, the Company did still fail at managing aspects of the crisis that they could have controlled. First and foremost, their participation in the First Afghan War essentially made their position in Herat untenable, partly due to Shah Shuja's unpopularity inevitably leading to conspiracies being plotted against him, and partly due to the fact that their army appeared much more dangerous to Yar Mohammed than that of Persia. Under those circumstances, it is understandable that he would see Persia as the lesser of two evils. After all, if the Company had already invaded the rest of Afghanistan, it was perfectly reasonable to assume that they

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[123] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3*, p. 400.
[124] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 33.
[125] Letter from Justin Shiel to the Earl of Malmsbury, 10 December 1852, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 114, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/476, p. 354.
[126] Bayly, 'Imperial ontological insecurity: Buffer States, International relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878', p. 829.

would do the same to Herat. In fact, during the time of the Government of India, when the question of Persia had again come up, a memorandum from India's Foreign Secretary, Alfred Lyall, to the Council of India explicitly used the East India Company's handling of Persia as an example of what not to do, saying that their actions had caused the steady growth of Russian power and influence in that country for the past 50 years.[127] A better way to keep 'the Gate of India' free from Persian influence would have been, as Kaye suggests, to make a friend of Dost Mohammed instead of an enemy, and have him add Herat to his own territory.[128] That is indeed the policy that the Company would adopt, to much greater effect, when Persia invaded Herat once more in 1856.

The reopening of diplomacy in the early years of the Government of India

As they did in all things, the Government of India took a much more diplomatic approach towards Persia than the East India Company had done. Despite all that the Company had done just months before the Mutiny to get Herat out of pro-Persian hands and into those of their new ally Dost Mohamed, by the time the Government of India officially took over in 1858, a new Prince, Ahmed Khan, the son-in-law of Dost Mohammed, had become the new ruler of Herat. However, the Persians, lavishing much money on the city and its new ruler, had managed to turn him to their side, despite having just invaded his city.[129] It was not until 1863 that, after Ahmed Khan allied with the Persians and marched on Kandahar, Dost Mohammed defeated them, and finally took control of the city.[130] He died just a few days later, but the city was now finally in the hands of a British ally and could be used as a buffer against Persia at last.

From there, the Government of India moved to re-open diplomatic relations with Persia, hoping that they would become, if not pro-British, then at least neutral. In 1863, Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick Goldsmid, an officer in the Indian army who would go on to oversee the development of the Indo-European Telegraph Company that would make communication between Britain and India much easier, wrote a report on a dispute between Persia and Khelat over the territory of Mekran.[131] Khelat was a Khanate in what is now Pakistan, while Mekran was a coastal region that stretched through both Persia and Khelat. Khelat was at the time an

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[127] Memorandum from A.C. Lyall on Herat and Seistan, 4 November 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 174.
[128] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3*, pp. 400-401.
[129] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 152.
[130] Ibid, p. 153.
[131] Report by F.J. Goldsmid to W.H. Havelock, Officiating Secretary to the Government, Bombay, Memorandum by the Rev. G. P. Badger on the Pretensions of Persia in Beloochistan and Mekran, drawn up with especial reference to her Claim to Gwadur and Charbar, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/18/C68, p. 7.

ally of the Government of India.[132] The report concludes in a rather more balanced manner than any such correspondence about Persia under the East India Company had, concluding that Persia should be checked at the earliest opportunity to prevent it from encroaching on Khelat, but stating that Persia's right to the territory it claims, while questionable, was no more so than the right of any other Government in the region to that territory.[133] The report suggests that the Government should decide upon an official boundary between Persia and Khelat in Western Mekran, and formalise it with a treaty to dissuade any conflict between the two.[134] This validates Amanat's position that the formation of the new Government of India represented the beginnings of a better relationship between India and Persia.[135] It likewise supports Firuz Kazemzadeh's contention that, from the year that his analysis begins, 1864, diplomacy was the main instrument of British Indian policy towards Persia.[136]

In 1865 Foreign Secretary Russell expressed his belief that Persia should be accorded the assistance of both Russia and Britain, but when the Shah of Persia, concerned about Russia's southward expansion through the khanates, made overtures to the Government of India for assistance, the Viceroy, Lord Lawrence, refused.[137] This was part of the Government of India's policy of 'masterly inactivity', of which Lawrence was a proponent. This was essentially a policy to simply focus on the defence and governance of India itself, and not involve themselves with the affairs of the surrounding nations. Kazemzadeh, argues that Lawrence, motivated by the failure in Afghanistan under the East India Company, strongly believed that India should have no interests beyond the territory formerly held by the Sikhs.[138] Lawrence, explaining his own reasoning for the change in policy, claimed that as the only way Russia could invade India was through Afghanistan, there was no threat in allowing them to overextend themselves and exhaust their resources invading other nations.[139] Essentially, the policy was a reaction to the disaster of the First Afghan War and suggested that if the Government were to interfere too much in the affairs of other nations, this would only result in these nations, particularly Afghanistan, going to Russia for protection, and therefore falling under its influence anyway.

Nonetheless, between 1865 and 1867, Persia again began encroaching on Afghanistan. This time, they took military control of the province of Seistan, which had previously been a part of

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[132] Ibid, p. 9.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, p. 354.
[136] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, p. viii.
[137] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 120.
[138] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, p. 13.
[139] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, pp. 110-111.

their territory until it was taken by Afghanistan in 1747.[140] In keeping with their new policy of non-interference, the Government of India did nothing, later setting up a commission to determine who the land belonged to from 1870-1871. In June 1869, it was reported that Persia had launched a raid on a district of Kandahar, and correspondence between the Viceroy and Ronald Taylor reveals that the Government were attempting to avoid doing anything to alienate either the Persians or the Afghans, instead giving assurances to both governments.[141] Kazemzadeh argues that the transition from a Conservative to a Liberal government in Britain did not result in a change of policy towards Russia or Persia, with the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Clarendon, attempting to create a neutral zone between India and Russia.[142]

Meanwhile, Persia became concerned over Russia's advance through Central Asia, with Shah Nasir Al-Din expressing to the British minister, Charles Allison, that it was more important than ever for the two states to be allied due to Russia's advances.[143] It would appear that the allegiance of Persia to Russia was no longer as secure as it had once seemed, and the Government of India now had an opportunity to gain it for themselves. This conflicts with Ingram's argument that Britain lost the Great Game when they failed to make Afghanistan a client state during the First Afghan War.[144] He argued that Persia was one of the 'buffer states' that the Company wanted to create in Asia, but if the Company had irreparably failed that objective by losing Afghanistan, the Government of India would not have had the opportunity to regain the support of Persia later.[145] Ingrams' treatment of the two governments as a singular entity could possibly explain this discrepancy. Likewise, Sergeev's assertion that the Great Game only began in the aftermath of the Crimean War is also made suspect in the case of Persia.[146] If that were the case, what would the Company and Russia have been doing competing in Persia in the first place? Dalrymple's argument that the Great Game began in 1828 with Lord Ellenborough's warning to the Duke of Wellington that the Russians were going to invade Persia to secure a path to India seems more plausible, based on the Company's early

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[140] Memorandum from O.T Burne to the Council of India on Persia, 1 December 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 198.
[141] Letter from Mr Thomson to the Viceroy of India, 12 June 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 29.
[142] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, p. 14.
[143] Ibid, pp. 15-16.
[144] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 167.
[145] Ibid, pp. 165-166.
[146] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 15.

actions in Persia, particularly regarding the various invasions of Herat.[147] Barbara English's argument that the East India Company's invasion of Persia over the invasion of Herat was effectively forgotten about after the 1857 Mutiny is also strengthened by this, as it demonstrates that the Shah considered the new Government of India to be potential allies and not necessarily enemies, despite the invasion less than twenty years earlier.[148]

The Government of India also mediated between Persia and its surrounding nations, such as Turkey, but even then, there remained an undercurrent of distrust. When the Government of India were helping the two to negotiate which of them had the rights to certain areas of the Persian Gulf in 1870, it was said in a dispatch from Viceroy Lord Mayo's Indian Government that the Persian Foreign Minister was still fearful that Britain would attack them there, as they had no navy to defend themselves.[149] This then casts doubt on English's argument that the invasion of Persia to defend Herat had been forgotten, as in this case it appears that despite the improving relationship between the two, the Persian Government still believed that another invasion was possible.[150] Looking at this evidence combined with that earlier mentioned, it appears that the Persians were unsure at this point as to whether the British in India were allies or enemies. However, the memorandum points out that it was only because of the British maritime policing of the Gulf that Persia were even able to trade there, as with no navy to defend themselves from surrounding Arab nations or even Turkey, their ships would never be able to pass through unharmed.[151] It concludes that as Persia did not have the means to protect the Gulf themselves, the Government of India would continue to protect the trade routes there, which, of course, were also being used by British ships to transport goods from India. This, then, sums up well the relationship between the Government of India in its early years and Persia, an uneasy, mistrustful relationship. However, it also shows that the Government of India, by this time, had no fear of Persia, and indeed acted quite condescendingly towards them. Indeed, in a dispatch from Viceroy Mayo's Government they behave quite dismissively, saying that as the Arab chiefs in the region have no confidence in Persia, the Government of India cannot be seen to be associated with them in the defence of the Gulf.[152] Likewise, a request from the Shah for British officers to be sent to train Persian

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[147] W. Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 52-53.
[148] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 155-156.
[149] Extract from a dispatch from the Political and Secret Department, 20th May 1870, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 40.
[150] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 155-156.
[151] Extract from a dispatch from the Political and Secret Department, 20th May 1870, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 40.
[152] Ibid, p. 41.

troops was rejected because Persia was seen as too weak.[153] This is very different from the Company, which saw the Persian conquest of Herat as one of their biggest threats. It also casts doubt on Sergeev's argument that ensuring that Russia could not use Persia to attack Afghanistan was one of Britain's main priorities at this time.[154] While this was the case under the East India Company, Sergeev does not include them as part of his analysis of the Great Game, which he contends did not begin until after the Crimean War.[155] This evidence indicates that the Government of India, which is part of Sergeev's analysis, did not fear Persia as the East India Company had.

However, true to the Government of India's cautious nature, a following minute by the Viceroy Lord Mayo made clear that no nation should station too powerful a naval force in the Gulf, as doing so would undoubtedly create much nervousness among the Persians and other Arab states.[156] This is an example of the Government of India's focus on ensuring the neutrality of Persia, as they attempted to balance keeping it happy with their other allies, including Turkey, which was still seen as a 'buffer' against Russia. Later in 1878, the Government of India also sought to prevent too strong a Turkish navy to operate in the Gulf, as explained by the Foreign Secretary, Lyall, for fear that this would 'add appreciably to the to the Turkish power of aggression against Persia, at a point where the Shah's capabilities of resistance were particularly feeble'.[157] Based on this, the Company were also trying to ensure that Persia would not be annexed by a more powerful nation either, even an ally like Turkey. In 1869, Russian soldiers landed at Qizil-Su, also known as Krasnovodsk, which was considered a violation of the sovereign rights of the Shah.[158] In keeping with the policy which became known as 'masterly inactivity', the Government of India argued that the territory was not truly Persian and did not intervene.[159] This was a policy popularised by Viceroy Lawrence, who served as Viceroy from 1864 to 1869 and contended that the greatest threat to India from Russia was that their approach would cause another Mutiny, and that the best way to mitigate this was to ensure

[153] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, pp. 16-17.
[154] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 101.
[155] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 15.
[156] Extract from minute by Lord Mayo, 21 July 1871, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 43.
[157] Extract from letter from Mr Lyall, 17 December 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 64.
[158] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, pp. 18-19.
[159] Ibid.

that Russia would always be seen as the aggressor in the region by refraining from intervening in the affairs of other Asian states.[160]

How effective was the East India Company's military force in deterring Persia?

By 1856, tensions between the East India Company and Persia had risen once again. In 1854, during the Crimean War, Britain had insisted that Persia remain neutral, but the Shah was still considering a new treaty with Russia.[161] In 1855, following a power struggle, Mohamed Yusuf, a man whose family was involved in a blood feud with that of Dost Mohammed, rose to the throne of Herat. This meant that Herat was now the enemy of both Persia and the rest of Afghanistan, putting the Company, who still saw the city as the 'key to India,' in a very precarious position. Even worse for the Company, they were currently negotiating a new alliance with Dost Mohammed, and so they did not want to be seen to openly support Mohamed Yusuf. In December 1855, according to Consul Richard Stevens, the Persian government received a letter from Herat suggesting that they would soon be invaded by Dost Mohammed, and asking for aid.[162] Stevens notes that the blood feud between Dost Mohammed and Mohammed Yusuf began with the murder of the previous ruler of Herat, Seyd Mohammed Khan, who had been married to Dost Mohammed's favourite daughter, and was therefore unlikely to end even in the event of Dost Mohammed's death.[163] Five days later, Stevens reported that the Shah of Persia had announced to the French, Ottoman and Russian delegations that he was mobilizing 10,000 soldiers in Khorassan, and that Dost Mohammed had 12,000 men camped on the side of Khandahar closest to Herat.[164] The Shah assured the French and Ottomans that this move had nothing to do with the at that time ongoing Crimean War, though Stevens opines that it can only be beneficial to Russia as it could force British troops to be pulled out of Crimea.[165]

In 1856, Persia once again launched an invasion of Herat, and once again, the Company scrambled to prevent the attack as they believed that Herat was the key to an invasion of India.[166] By this time, the Company's tensions with Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan had cooled down, but when he asked for weapons and men, Lord Canning, the Governor-General at the

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[160] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[161] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 91.
[162] Letter from Consul Stevens to the Earl of Clarendon, 31 December 1855, Affairs of Persia: Papers, Part I, 1856, The National Archives, FO 539/7, p. 12.
[163] Ibid, p. 10.
[164] Ibid, p. 12.
[165] Ibid, p. 10.
[166] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3*, p. 400.

time, was still reluctant.[167] Soon, however, it seemed clear that Herat was about to fall, and Canning quickly changed his policy, but it was too late. Barbara English wrote that Mohammed Yusuf had been caught planning to sell the city out to the Persians and overthrown by his subordinate Esan Khan, who then wrote to Canning asking for assistance. Canning refused, believing that any men he sent would simply be killed.[168] Richard Stevens, the Consul in Persia, writes that the invasion of Herat by Persia had actually been requested by Mohammed Yusuf himself, as he had expected an invasion by Dost Mohammed Khan from the Afghan side, and yet after the coup, Mohammed Yusuf was handed to the Persians who treated him as a prisoner, clearly not following his instructions.[169] The Persians entered Herat soon afterward. The envoy to Persia, Charles Murray, wrote to Lord Clarendon that Persia was justifying the invasion by claiming self defence against Dost Mohammed Khan, who they claim was planning to invade the city himself.[170] Murray did not believe this explanation as he pointed out that Dost Mohammed had not moved a single regiment a day's journey away from the road to Herat.[171] Murray argues that the invasion of Herat was simply an act of aggression from Persia and cites the Persian Government's own proclamation that they would withdraw from Herat only on the condition that all of Afghanistan be declared subservient to them.[172] However, despite Canning's concerns this did still lead to the Company's relations with Dost Mohammed becoming friendly again, as it was decided that he would be the one to take control of Herat and ensure that such an invasion would not happen again, though he would not end up actually taking control until 1863.[173] Kaye believed that a strong alliance with Dost Mohammed was the only way that the Company could secure Herat and therefore India from the Persian threat.[174] After a successful negotiation with him, the Company's next objective would be to get the Persians out of Herat.

Not wanting to march an army through Afghanistan, they decided instead to launch a naval attack on the Persian Gulf. It was easy to find a justification for war, as Persia had already signed a treaty giving up all claim to Herat in 1853, which they were now in breach of.[175] For

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[167] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 92.
[168] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 55.
[169] Letter from Richard Stevens to the Earl of Clarendon, 19 May 1856, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/487, p. 428.
[170] Letter from C. A. Murray to the Earl of Clarendon, 9 December 1856, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 128, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/490, p. 228.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid, p. 229.
[173] English, *John Company's Last War*, p. 153.
[174] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3*, p. 401.
[175] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 81.

his part, Persian ambassador Ferokh Khan refused to negotiate unless assured that the military expedition would not land in Persia until an answer from Tehran, the capital had been received.[176] The port selected was Bushire, the chief sea port through which most trade of its province must flow.[177] The attack did not meet with much resistance, and by 1857 another division of troops were leaving for Persia, led by James Outram.[178] With these reinforcements, the army marched further into Persia, and confronted the Persian army at Khoosh-ab. The Company's army broke the Persian infantry square with only their cavalry, a feat previously thought to be impossible, and the Persians retreated before the Company's infantry even had the chance to enter the battle.[179] But even now, the Shah remained in Herat, despite the fact that his armies in Persia desperately needed reinforcements.

As a result, Outram's army moved to attack their next target, the town of Mohammerah. Once again, the Persians fled not long after the battle had begun.[180] This at last convinced the Shah to retreat from Herat.[181] What the men fighting at Mohammerah did not know was that peace had been declared before the battle had even begun. The Shah agreed to withdraw all of his troops, renounce all claims to Herat, and vowed never to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan.[182] Of course, he had already agreed to do exactly this in 1853, and had already broken his word once, so it was difficult for the Company to believe him. Nevertheless, he withdrew his army exactly as promised, and the Company also withdrew their own troops from Persia, and just in time, too, as the Mutiny would break out that same month. Overall, this can only be considered a victory for the Company. Not only had they forced the occupying army to retreat from Herat, but they had also utterly humiliated the Persian army in battle on three separate occasions and strengthened their crucial alliance with Dost Mohammed in the process, mitigating some of the disaster of the First Afghan War by positioning Afghanistan as at least a tentative ally once again. The Company's aggressive approach was certainly an advantage in this kind of situation, but it did nothing to solve the underlying problems that had caused this crisis. In the end, the Company were in only a slightly better position than they had been before the invasion; Persia was still lost to Russian influence, and Herat still needed to be defended. The Shah had not kept his word when he had previously renounced ownership of

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[176] Letter from Messrs Moore and Churchill to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, 6 December 1856, Affairs of Persia: Papers, Part I, 1856, The National Archives, FO 539/7, p. 168.
[177] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 65.
[178] Ibid, p. 105.
[179] Ibid, p. 116.
[180] Ibid, p. 134.
[181] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 92.
[182] English, *John Company's Last War,* p. 142.

Herat, and there was no reason to believe that he would do so this time. Still, the Company had repelled his attacks twice with simply the threat of war, and now they had proven that they were willing to follow through on that threat. Had the Mutiny not happened when it did, Herat would likely have been secure, even if Persia was not.

The successes and limitations of the Government of India's diplomacy with Persia

By 1871, attitudes in the Government of India towards Persia were beginning to change, as Edward Eastwick, an expert on Persian affairs, argued that the Government of India should return to the old strategy of trying to make Persia into a successful 'buffer state' that would be inaccessible to Russia, buying the Shah through financial subsidies and military advisors.[183] At around the same time, British commerce and trade began to operate in Persia. These attitudes were still not widespread, however. Also in 1871, a British Commission, aiming to prevent Persian encroachments into Khelat and Afghanistan, demarcated the official boundaries of Persia with those regions, with Persia being awarded significant territory including half of the Seistan province which had been a point of contention between them and Afghanistan for many years.[184] Khelat was a Kurdish region, named Ahlat in the present day, which at the time was under the control of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1873 and 1874, Russia began its encroachments on Merv, which caused the Shah to warn the British Minister at Tehran of the dangers that its fall would present to Persia.[185] But at this point, the Government of India were still unwilling to commit themselves to an alliance with Persia, and instead negotiated with Russia directly. However as early as 1874, evidence began to arise that Persia may indeed be able to serve as a buffer against Russian expansion. For example, in May of 1874 William Taylour Thomson, a British military officer and diplomat, received word from his agent in Asterabad that Russia had ordered the chiefs of the Yemoot Turkoman tribes, which resided within Russian territory, must guarantee the safety of Russian merchants travelling through their territory, as well as provide the Russians with 6,000 camels, or leave.[186] However the Chiefs agreed to submit to Russia only if the Persian Government did not desire to retain them, saying that the Russian Government was powerful and that they did

[183] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 132.
[184] Memorandum from O.T Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 190.
[185] Ibid, p. 377.
[186] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 30 May 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 12.

not want to oppose them.[187] This demonstrates both that the smaller groups in the region saw Russia as a threat that was too dangerous to fight back against, and that they saw the protection of Persia as a potential defence against that threat. This was exactly what the Indian Government had desired Persia to be, and what the East India Company had failed to accomplish when Persia had fallen under the influence of Russia.

The Russian General Lomakin (sometimes spelled as Lamakin or Llamakin in British documents), claimed to the Persian government that 'his intention was only to give them (the Yemoot) good advice, with a view to the preservation of peace and tranquillity on the frontier', but as Taylour Thomson points out, this was not convincing to either the Persian or Indian Governments.[188] In a letter to Edward Stanley the new Earl of Derby and Foreign Secretary, Lord Augustus Loftus, the Ambassador to Russia, writes that since the conquest of Khiva by the Russians in 1873 it had become obvious that they planned to occupy all of the steppes separating the Oxus river from Persia.[189] As a naturally defensible boundary the Oxus river represented a good strategic location for a border to be drawn. Loftus proceeded to outline the reasoning behind the Russians' plans, explaining that they found it necessary to obtain a safe transport route between the Caspian Sea and Khiva, and maintained a line of military connection between the mouth of the Attrek river and Khiva.[190]

Loftus feared that should Russia succeed in taking Merv, the final piece of territory linking these together, they would acquire a base of military operations capable of threatening Persia and Afghanistan, and therefore 'become a standing danger to our Indian Empire'.[191] Merv was in modern day Turkmenistan, near the border of both Persia and Afghanistan, and at the time had been held by Khiva until 1856, when the Tekke Turcomans took control of the city. This demonstrates not only that the Indian Government were still concerned about Russian expansionism despite their more passive attitude in comparison to the East India Company, but that they considered Persia alongside Afghanistan to be one of the key states for the protection of India. However, in keeping with the Government of India's more diplomatic approach to Russia, Loftus assured Derby of his belief in the Russian Emperor's pacific disposition and insists that they need only warn Russia of the dangers of their current

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[187] Ibid.
[188] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 30 June 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 13.
[189] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 28 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 13.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid, p. 14.

expansion to resolve the issue.[192] According to Owen Tudor Burne, who at the time had been assistant secretary to the political and secret department, the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook's Government of India still had a poor opinion of Persia at this time, but in the end decided to encourage Persia to open up its southern communications, thus introducing British influence from the South.[193] This would be the beginning of an improvement in relations between the Government of India and Persia, and simultaneously a worsening in the relationship between Russia and Persia, due to Russia's encroachments on Merv.

However, this change did not mean that Persia was not still treated with some suspicion. In March 1874, a letter from the envoy to Persia indicated that a Persian envoy had been dispatched to Herat, reportedly to complain that recent Turkoman raids on Persia had been allowed to pass Herat on both the attack and retreat without intervention from Herat.[194] These reports expressed suspicion that there was some political intrigue is being carried out in Persia, however the envoy does not believe that the Shah intends any policy that could threaten Afghanistan.[195] This is in stark contrast to the envoy to Persia under the East India Company, who dismissed Persia's stated motivations in Herat as lies.[196] Under the Government of India, the reports from the envoy in Persia, while still expressing some suspicion, were far more charitable towards Persia. This again supports Amanat's argument that the British Government taking direct control of the Government of India represented the beginning of a better relationship between India and Persia.[197]

In July 1874 General Lomakin visited Asterabad and claimed that there was no ill intent between Russia and Persia, that their friendship was as great as ever, and that they did not require dominion over the Turkomans, but only desired safe passage through their territory, stating that the Persians would also benefit from such a safe route existing.[198] In this instance

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[192] Ibid.
[193] Memorandum from O.T Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 190.
[194] Letter from Her Majesty's Minister at Tehran to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1874, Political No. 118 of 1874, Forwarding Papers Regarding the Deputation of a Persian Agent to Herat, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/6/118, p. 358.
[195] Letter from Her Majesty's Minister at Tehran to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 10 March 1874, Political No. 118 of 1874, Forwarding Papers Regarding the Deputation of a Persian Agent to Herat, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/6/118, p. 358.
[196] Letter from C. A. Murray to the Earl of Clarendon, 9 December 1856, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 128, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/490, p. 228.
[197] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, p. 354.
[198] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 10 July 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 17.

the Government of India's passivity had earned them a potential new ally, while Russia's expansionism, so reminiscent of the policies of the East India Company, was beginning to lose them one. An illustration of this is the letter sent by the Shah of Persia to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in August 1874, in which he noted that Persia had discovered the value of the friendship of Britain following a recent visit with the Queen and her ministers in London, expressing concern about the recent expansion of Russian territory in Central Asia, suggesting that Persia should take control of Merv so that Russia could not, and thereby creating a barrier between Russia and Afghanistan.[199] Of course, the Shah did have an ulterior motive in this circumstance, being the potential gain of the territory of Merv, but the fact that he was reaching out to the British in opposition to the Russians is a significant change to the relationship Persia had had with the two empires during the time of the East India Company. In the letter, the Shah requests that the British give official support to the Persian occupation of Merv, and send agents to convince the peoples of Merv that they would be destroyed by Russia if they did not submit to Persia.[200] Had this been done, it would have been very similar to the expeditions undertaken by the likes of the political agents Arthur Conolly and Charles Stoddart to Khiva and Bukhara under the East India Company. The Shah also asked for support for Persia in a potential conflict with Turkey, which he had already anticipated.[201]

However, the Indian Government were still unwilling to act, and these issues would become more prominent in the following years. In October, Taylour Thomson opined that Persia was actually unable to resist any demand of Russia without aid.[202] Further, a note from Governor-General Northbrook to Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, the Marquis of Salisbury and new Secretary of State for India, suggested that all of the Persian territory between the Attrek and the Goorgan was now practically annexed to Russia.[203] If Persia was to be an ally of the Indian Government against Russia, they did not appear to believe it a strong or reliable one. Instructed by Derby, Loftus informed de Westmann, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in the absence of Prince Gorchakov, that the territory in question was to be considered unquestionably Persian, and

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[199] Autograph note addressed by the Shah to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 12 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 17.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid, p. 18.
[202] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 3 October 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 18.
[203] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Marquis of Salisbury, 8 September 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 19.

that General Lomakin was not justified in interfering with it.[204] The Russian response was that Lomakin's declaration of dominion over the tribes in that area was a mistranslation of the Tartar text he had originally sent to those tribes, that they had already corresponded with the Persian Government on this matter and that their explanations had been perfectly satisfactory to them, and that they considered it odd for the British to interfere in a matter which concerned only Russia and Persia.[205] Taylour Thomson gave no credence to this explanation and advised Derby to support Persia in preventing Russia from making any further advance towards the Attrek, as he believed Persia would not dare to do so without support.[206]

In December of 1874, Lomakin marched to occupy Kareekala, a strategic point considered by Persia to be part of their territory.[207] Kareekala was on the north of the Attrek river and was considered to be a strategic point because of its position on the river, having been occupied by Persia in 1869, with Taylour Thomson believing that its occupation by Russia would be a precursor to the occupation of Merv and further 'intrigues' in Afghanistan.[208] Taylour Thomson believed that the Persians would be ready to resist this advance if given support similar to that which had been given to Afghanistan.[209] In a later letter, he expressed exasperation at the Russian claim that the Attrek was mutually agreed to be the border between Russian and Persian holdings, as the Shah had explicitly denied this, citing a letter written by the Shah in 1869.[210] In the letter, written in response to the building of a Russian fort at Krasnovodsk (or Kizzil Soo, as it was named by the Persians), and cites the building of forts at the mouths of the Attrek and Goorgan rivers and the subjugation of the Yemoot Turkomans, who had been subjects of Persia for 1000 years, under Russian rule as the Shah's fears of Russia's next moves

[204] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 17 November 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 21.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 8 December 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 22.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 12 December 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 22.
[209] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 8 December 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 22.
[210] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 27 January 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 25.

after the building of these forts.[211] Of course, these were the very actions which Russia had begun to take in the mid-1870s, proving Taylour Thomson's point. These rivers were significant as the Attrek formed a natural border between Persia and modern-day Turkmenistan, which after Russia's annexation of Khiva had fallen under Russian control. Krasnovodsk, which was built where the river met the Caspian Sea, had been used as Russia's base of operations against Khiva and Bukhara. Loftus expresses similar sentiments, stating that he believed Persia had only recognised the mouth of the river Attrek, and not the entire length of the river, as the border between Russian and Persian territory, and that as Lomakin was now conducting military expeditions along the entire length of the river, the status quo was not being maintained.[212] However, according to Lord George Hamilton, at the time the Under-Secretary of State for India, both Derby and Salisbury agreed that it would be unwise for Persia to oppose Russia with the current unstable state of its border.[213] Despite their concerns, the Indian Government continued to remain passive.

A letter from the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Russian Minister sent in December 1874 sheds some light on the relationship between Russia and Persia during this time. This letter confirms that the claim of General Lomakin that Persia had accepted Russia's explanation for its claim on the disputed territories was untrue, as the Persian Minister, Mirza Hussein Khan, openly rejected the Russian claim that the tribes living in the region surrounding the River Attrek, being nomadic, do not owe allegiance to Persia or any other power, instead stating that the River Attrek was inseparable from Persia and that, though some of the tribes in question spent half the year in Russian territory, they have always paid tribute to the Persian Government.[214] Indeed, in Mirza's view, 'as regards to their allegiance to Persia there cannot be for us the slightest doubt'.[215] Russian Minister Beger's response was very brief and simply stated that Lomakin's actions were irrelevant to Persia's interests and did not justify the

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[211] Translation of the Shah's Autograph regarding the Construction of a Fort at Krasnovodsk read to the Minister of Russia at Tehran by Yahya Khan, Moatemed-ul-Moolk on 4 December 1869, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 25.
[212] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 30 March 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 27.
[213] Letter from Lord G. Hamilton to Lord Tenterden, 31 December 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 23.
[214] Translation of Letter from Mirza Hoossein Khan to M. Beger, 26 December 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 37-38.
[215] Ibid.

repeated complaints of the Persian Government.[216] Mirza responded stating that any interference in the affairs of the Turkoman tribes by Russia constituted a violation of Persia's territorial and even sacred rights.[217] This exchange further demonstrates the way in which Russia's expansionism during this time period caused its relationship with Persia to deteriorate. Furthermore, the Shah sent a letter to his Minister for Foreign Affairs complaining that General Lomakin had sent a decree demanding that the Yemoot Turkomans, who were Persian subjects, present themselves to him, and stating that Lomakin's actions were contrary to the friendship between the two governments.[218] Governor-General Northbrook wrote that Russia now claimed 'supreme authority' over the Attrek and Goorgan rivers, which passed through Persia territory, and that Russia no longer intended to maintain the integrity of Persia's borders.[219]

In October of 1875 Lomakin was reported to be extending his country's influence over the Yemoot and Akhal tribes, and it was suggested that there was a plan to divert part of the water flow of the Lower Attrek to build a fort at Meshed Misrian, which Taylour Thomson described as 'a fresh invasion of the rights of Persia by the Russian Government, the extreme limit of whose pretensions has hitherto been that the waters of the Attrek are the joint property of both States'.[220] In May of 1876 Taylour Thomson learned from his agent in Asterabad that the Yemmoot Turkomans were now trying to entice the other Turkoman tribes away from Persia, and that while there remained friendship between the Russian Consul and the Governor-General of Asterabad, he and other Persian authorities were now becoming aware of the extent of the Russian enticement of the Turkoman tribes.[221]

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[216] Translation of Letter from M. Beger to Mirza Hoossein Khan, 5 March 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 38.
[217] Translation of Letter from Mirza Hoossein Khan to M. Beger, 7 March 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 38.
[218] Translation of Letter from His Majesty the Shah to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 29 November 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 64.
[219] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Marquis of Salisbury, 8 September 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 19.
[220] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 26 October 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 58.
[221] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 28 May 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 82.

In July 1876 it was reported that the Akhal Turkoman chiefs had been advised by a prominent leader, Abdul Hassan Khan, to openly declare allegiance to Persia in the event of a Russian advance.[222] In October terms for this agreement were sent to Persia, though Taylour Thomson was unsure if Persia would be able to hold up their end of the bargain.[223] By December, it was reported that the Russian Consul and Persian Foreign Office agent, once friendly, were now making daily complaints of one another.[224] All of this left the Government of India in a very different situation regarding Persia than the East India Company had been. No longer was India faced with a Persia operating as a proxy for Russia, but instead one that they could negotiate and ally with. However Indian Government did not fully capitalise on the opportunity presented to them. Despite the Persian Government repeatedly asking for aid comparable to that which Afghanistan received, and their assurances that they would defy Russia's expansion if they were to receive it, the Indian Government were unwilling to provide even lesser levels of support. Their support of Persia during the early to mid-1870s seems to be limited to politely reminding Russia of their prior promise not to interfere in Persian affairs, despite revealing in their own internal correspondence that they considered Persia to be one of their key defensive states for preserving the Indian Empire. Despite these claims it is clear that they did not place as much importance on Persia as they did on Afghanistan and seemed to think of Persia as a weak ally unable to stand up to Russia. Nonetheless, having Persia as an unreliable ally that opposed Russian expansion, even if they could not confront Russia directly, still left them in a more advantageous situation regarding Persia than the East India Company had been. Under the company, Persia had been an active threat to Afghanistan under direct Russian influence, while under the Government of India, that Russian influence had been diminished significantly. This could be argued to be more a result of Russian expansionism souring the relationship between the two nations than any success on the Indian Government's part, however it should be noted that British India had ceased its expansionism just as Russia had vastly increased its own.

In 1877, the new Viceroy, Lytton, came to power in India, bringing with him an end to the policy of 'masterly inactivity' and a return to more 'forward' policies closer to those of the East

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[222] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 26 July 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 86.
[223] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 6 October 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 99.
[224] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Taylour Thomas, 22 December 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 119.

India Company, though Lytton was still opposed to war and expansionism. His personal secretary at the time, Burne, wrote that in relation to Persia, his first goal was the establishment of British Agents there with full access to Merv.[225] Later that year, Persia allowed a delegation from the Tekke-Turcoman tribes into Teheran, indicating that the tribesmen owed Persia their allegiance. In return, Russia seized their border village Kizil Avrat as a warning.[226] This indicates that he relationship between Russia and Persia had indeed soured, meaning that Eastwick's plan was indeed possible. Anticipating this attack, George Thorne Ricketts, who had served in the Indian Army and later become a diplomat, suggested that to prevent any further Russian progression, Persia must immediately occupy the line of its own frontier, including Asterabad, Abiverd, Werashan, Merv, Kilat and Sarachs, and that this could not be done unless guided by English officers.[227] However this was not done in time. In February Ricketts, hearing of the taking of Kizil Avrat, again suggested that the Persians could mount a strong defence, as Russia would not be willing to declare open war on Persia and would therefore be forced to halt their advance, further warning that failing to do so would leave Herat vulnerable.[228]

George Campbell Napier, a Colonel in the Indian Army, while on an expedition in Central Asia speaks of the Akhal tribe willingly surrendering to Persia in 1876 to escape Russian expansion, and that the Russian General Lomakin would likely not be allowed to pursue, as Russia was at that time still attempting to secure the co-operation of Persia.[229] A letter from January 1876 reveals that, two years before, the Russian forces now in control of Khiva demanded that the Akhals, who had in the past been subjects of Khiva, either swear allegiance to Russia or leave.[230] The Akhals claimed to be following this directive by leaving for Persia.[231] In a meeting with Government of India diplomat, and younger brother of William Taylour Thomson, Ronald Thomson, the Shah of Persia said that he had no choice but to renounce his claim to the territory north of the Atrek and Gurgan rivers in order to protect the territory south of them,

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[225] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 190.
[226] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 145.
[227] Letter from Mr Ricketts to the Earl of Derby, 23 January 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 120.
[228] Letter from Mr Ricketts to the Earl of Derby, 5 February 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 124.
[229] Letter from G. C. Napier to the Council of India, 30 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 124.
[230] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 2 January 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 122.
[231] Ibid.

but could not make a similar deal now without being seen as having ceded the territory to Russia. He also vehemently denied the existence of any deal between Persia and Russia.[232] However, after an expedition from Russia in 1878, Persia capitulated, leaving the Akhal with no choice but to surrender to Russia, casting doubt upon their reliability. Napier speculates that the Russian expedition may have even been supplied through Persia.[233] The allegiance of Persia was, therefore, still in question, though the Persians may have merely thought that they could do nothing to stop Russia. Another memorandum on the same subject by Owen Tudor Burne, at the time a Colonel in the Indian army, indicates that the Russians planned this expedition as a precursor to a march on Afghanistan, using the promise of Herat to gain the support of Persia, but retreated before they could do so, seemingly on the orders of the Tsar.[234] In his report on Russian movement in the region, Napier concludes that the Russian army never actually needed supplies from Persia, but would have if they had continued to their objective, and may have retreated as a result of that.[235] He believed, however, that Persia's neutrality was just a mask, and that if war were to break out between Britain and Russia, Persia would give assistance to Russia once again.[236] He also speculated that Russia's design may be once again to take Herat, with the assistance of Persian supplies, in a return to the old fears of the East India Company.[237] However, this speculated invasion would never come to pass. Lord George Hamilton suggested that rather than planning to invade Herat, Persia actually feared being invaded by Herat itself, suggesting that if there were an invasion of Persia by Afghanistan, the British would be held responsible.[238]

When war broke out between Russia and Turkey, the Russian War Minister Miliutin went out of his way to keep Persia neutral, as he feared that the Government of India could take the opportunity to launch an invasion through Persia and into the Caucasus.[239] Ronald Thomson believed that, following Russia's victory over Turkey, Russian influence in Persia had become

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[232] Extract from Letter from Mr Ronald Thomson, 14 August 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 191.
[233] Letter from G. C. Napier to the Council of India, 30 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 126.
[234] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 183.
[235] Letter from G. C. Napier to the Council of India, 30 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 130.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid, p. 132.
[238] Letter from Lord G. Hamilton to Lord Tenterden, 30 April 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 129.
[239] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 146.

visibly strengthened once again.[240] He suggests that this is because Britain had come to be considered Turkey's natural protector, due to their efforts in the Crimean War, and so when they did not come to Turkey's aid, it made them look weak.[241] By 1878, the Russian Governor-General Kaufman was suggesting that both Persia and Afghanistan be made into vassal states.[242] Both Russian and British strategists considered Persia a location of key strategic importance, with the British believing it to be the place from which the only real danger from Russia to India could be found, and the Russians believing it to be a flanking position through which Russian Turkestan could be attacked.[243] Persia, however, steadfastly avoided taking sides, while still attempting to negotiate the transfer of Herat into their hands.[244] In Russia, concerns about Persia were just as prevalent as they were in India, as the St Petersburg Gazette ironically noted the preponderance of British influence in the region, and feared what would happen when the Shah realised that he no longer had an Afghanistan hostile to Britain between India and him.[245]

In that same year, a Russian army landed on the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea. Reports in India differed as to their intentions, with some believing that they were planning an attack on the Persian border, while others believed that the Persians were providing the Russians with supplies.[246] When offered British support, the Persians refused, saying that the British had never supported them in the past, but they did prevent the supplies from reaching the Russian army, causing them to withdraw.[247] In 1878, while on a diplomatic mission to Merv, G.C. Napier noted that the people of Merv, who were also Turkomans, were facing a choice between submission to Russia or to become a protectorate of Persia.[248] Napier speaks positively of the prospect Merv allying with Persia, suggesting that it would commit Persia to the opposition of a policy of Russian aggression.[249] At this point, Napier was quite optimistic about the prospects of Persia becoming an ally in the Great Game against Russia. A memorandum from Owen Tudor Burne also notes an alliance with Persia for the protection of

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[240] Extract from letter from Ronald Thomson, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 190.
[241] Ibid, p. 381.
[242] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 179.
[243] Ibid, p. 181.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 185.
[246] Johnson, *The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 147.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Letter from G. C. Napier to the Council of India, 30 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 122.
[249] Ibid.

the Turkomans as one of the Government of India's three main options for arresting the advance of Russia.[250] Likewise, a military attaché at St Petersburg learned that the Russian's considered their ability to take Merv dependent mainly on the attitude of Persia.[251] Thomson suggested that a good solution to this problem would be to ensure that Merv become dependent on Persia, saying that this would be far preferable to it becoming occupied by Russia. He argued that this would place Persia under obligation to the Government of India while simultaneously gaining the gratitude of the Turcomans and robbing Russia of an important strategic location.[252] It is clear at this point that, rather than being a Russian ally as it had been during the time of the East India Company, Persia had now become a neutral third party that both sides could negotiate with, and could possibly side with either. By 1879, the Shah was offering that, in exchange for British support in case of an invasion by Russia, he would assist the Government of India in any action, military or diplomatic, which they might consider necessary to check the Russian advance in the direction of Afghanistan.[253] Not since the 1830s had any British force in India had such an opportunity to sway Persia to its own side. It must be said however, that this success was not all their own doing, and that they owed much to the aggressive advance of Russia, which scared the Persians into seeking protection for fear that they would be the next to be annexed. However, the Government of India can be given credit for its slow opening of communications with Persia from 1873 onwards, which allowed them to slowly win the trust of the Shah.

Their policy of non-interference with the states surrounding India also served them well here, as they would certainly have looked like a more trustworthy ally to Persia after two decades of watching Russia slowly conquer its way across Central Asia, while the Government of India simply remained in its pre-established territory and avoided war as much as possible. The Government of India had also benefited Persia by ruling in its favour regarding the ownership of Seistan province, earning them some goodwill. Unfortunately for the Government of India, the Second Afghan War would soon break out, forcing them to deal with the much more pressing matter of Afghanistan. The accord that they had reached with Persia was also fragile. In a letter to his foreign minister, the Shah asked why, if the British thought the matter of such importance, did they not use their military might to prevent Russia's expedition against Merv,

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[250] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 183.
[251] Ibid, p. 186.
[252] Ibid, p. 192.
[253] Ibid.

and points out that Persia did not have the power to prevent Russia from doing anything.[254] He also seemed to imply that he suspected the British could not stop Russia either, stating 'it would be better that the British Government, instead of discussing and pressing these minor and useless details, should, if they can, put a stop to the military movement of the Russians in this direction.[255] This lends credence to Thomson's theory that the Persians perceived the British as weak when they chose not to intercede in the Russo-Turkish War. As a result, by the time of the Second Afghan War Persia could feasibly have sided with either side.

While trying to negotiate the end of the Second Afghan War, Lytton noted that they must always consider the affairs of Russia and Persia as political factors when dealing with Afghanistan.[256] In the same letter, he considered making territory concessions to Persia in order to improve the Government of India's influence there.[257] This included the possibility of giving Persia control of Herat, which Lytton believed would cause no harm to India on its own.[258] This is a massive divergence from the policy of the East India Company, which saw the defence of Herat as of the utmost importance. This again contradicts Sergeev's argument that the protection of Afghanistan from Persia was one of the Government of India's main priorities.[259] If Lytton was willing to give part of Afghanistan to Persia, he clearly did not see the Persians as the threat that they had been considered during the time of the East India Company.

It must be noted that this took place during the Second Afghan War, during a time at which the Government of India were considering either annexing Afghanistan outright or installing an ally as Amir. Either of these options would have lessened the threat of a Persia-controlled Herat significantly. However, the Government of India had already demonstrated its willingness to cede territory to Persia in 1871, when it had ruled that they were the rightful rulers of half of Seistan Province. The deal to give up Herat would have also included the other half of this province. Lytton thought it unwise to offer this territory unless at least Khandahar was annexed by the Government of India and Persia agreed to contribute money to construct a railway between Khandahar and Herat, thus linking the two cities. He believes that in this case,

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[254] Letter from the Shah to the Sepeh Salar, Minister for Foreign Affairs, 5 May 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 193.
[255] Ibid, p. 384.
[256] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, 30 January 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 154.
[257] Ibid, p. 157.
[258] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, 5 November 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, pp. 159-160.
[259] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 101.

Persia would be able to be trusted as a strong barrier against Russia, but otherwise, Persia's subjugation to Russia would be inevitable.[260] He further writes that he would happily co-operate in any arrangement for 'strengthening the independence of Persia.'[261]

Lytton later considered the proposals of the Shah communicated to him by Ronald Thomson, and they are quite illuminating as to the intentions of Persis towards the Government of India and Russia at this time. The Shah proposed that Persia be placed in control of Herat until such a time as it lost the confidence of Britain, or Russia took control of Merv, that the Government of India would have the right to send their own troops to Herat should it be in danger of falling into the wrong hands, that British officers would be allowed to instruct the Persian garrison, and that Persia was to obstruct the Russian advance as much as possible.[262] This would indicate that by this time Persia were indeed planning to side with the Government of India over Russia.

However, Lytton, still suspicious, believed that these terms were illusory, as Persia would have no useful way of actually obstructing the Russian advance without inciting Russia to attack them, and that regardless of them having the right on paper to remove Persia from Herat should they lose confidence in them, they would still have to do this by force, as if Persia did betray them the deal would be worthless.[263] Due to this, Lytton still feared that allowing Persia into Herat may be the same as allowing Russia access to all of Afghanistan. This being the case, Sergeev's argument would be at least partially correct, in that preventing Russia from using Persia as a weapon against Afghanistan was at least still a priority under the Government of India, even if it could no longer be seen as a main priority due to Persia's perceived weakness.[264] Of course, in the end, none of this came to pass, as the Government of India did not annex Afghanistan, and the new Amir they installed, Abdur Rahman Khan, wanted Herat for himself. Still, it seems clear that the Government of India saw Persia as far less of a threat than the Company had and was even willing to give up territory to establish their own influence there in place of Russia's. This is similar to the policy that the Government of India eventually decided on for Afghanistan, and further demonstrates that they had no desire to expand their own territory but would rather surround themselves with allies. The Government

[260] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, 5 November 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 160.
[261] Letter from Lytton to Lord Cranbrook, 10 November 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 167.
[262] Ibid, p. 171.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 101.

of India's victory in the Second Afghan War had put them in a much better position in terms of Persia. Previously, Persia's location on the border of an either neutral or anti-British Afghanistan had left Afghanistan open to Russian influence through Persia. But with Abdur Rahman Khan on the throne, Afghanistan was essentially safe, as he would not tolerate foreigners interfering in his state's internal affairs.

But only a year after the Second Afghan War, the Government of India had suffered a major setback in its diplomatic mission in Persia, as in 1881, unbeknownst to the Government of India, Russia and Persia had signed the Russo-Persian Boundary Convention, which fixed their boundaries with each other, proclaimed Persia's non-interference in the affairs of the Turkmen tribes, allowed Russian troops to pass through Persian territory, and gave the Russians the right to station political agents in Persia.[265] The Government of India would not even find out about this deal until 1884. This would appear to be a failure on the part of the Government of India, but it was not necessarily as crippling to Britain's interests in Persia as it would first appear. Although Russian influence in Persia initially became stronger, this proved only temporary. By 1891, according to a report by Lieutenant Newnham, an attaché with the relatively newly formed intelligence branch of the Indian Army reported that a rift had again formed between Russia and Persia, and that particularly the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs had greatly displeased the Russians.[266] The report concluded that the Shah had adopted a firm tone with the Russians and was determined not to yield to their demands to remove the Minister from his post, despite their warnings that refusal would cause a 'rupture' between the two countries.[267] Therefore it would appear that the treaty did not prevent Russia and Persia's relationship from deteriorating, and that the Government of India had not missed their opportunity to turn Persia into a more neutral state as it had appeared.

Finally, in 1907, Britain and Russia signed the Anglo-Russian Convention, which formalised their spheres of influence in Asia. In this agreement, while Britain had to recognise northern Persia as part of Russia's sphere of influence, Russia likewise recognised southern Persia as part of Britain's sphere of influence.[268] Both countries agreed by official treaty not to interfere in the areas of Persia that were part of the sphere of the opposing Government.[269] Based on

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[265] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, pp. 198-199.
[266] Report from A.T.H. Newnham, 7 June 1891, Lord Curzon's Notes on Persia, The British Library, Mss Eur F112/611, p. 557.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, pp. 520-522.
[269] Anglo-Russian Convention, signed by A. Nicholson and Isvolsky, 18 August 1907, Memorandum respecting Current Events in Persia for the Years 1906 and 1907, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/18/C121, p. 91.

this, the Russo-Persian Boundary Convention appears to not have been the massive failure on the part of the Government of India that it had appeared to be, or at least, not an unrecoverable one. Though not perfect, after the Anglo-Russian Convention, the Government of India was in a much better position than the East India Company had ever been regarding Persia. Had the Government of India not improved their relationship with Persia between 1858 and 1880, it is unlikely that this could have happened, as under the East India Company, the entirety of Persia had been firmly under Russian influence. Had that continued to be the case under the Government of India, it would almost certainly have been codified as such in this treaty, leaving India in a worse position. Additionally, after installing Abdur Rahman Khan as Amir of Afghanistan, the Government of India had essentially neutralised the threat of a Persian invasion of Herat. Persia had been on the decline as a power in the region for quite a while, and having a strong leader like Abdur Rahman as an ally ensured that that border would be secure.

However, the Government of India had missed an opportunity to increase their influence in Persia even further, due to the Viceroy Lord John Lawrence and his policy of 'masterly inactivity.' As early as 1865, Lawrence had had the opportunity to begin rebuilding British influence in Persia, because of Persia's deteriorating relationship with Russia, but had neglected to do so. By the time Lytton became the Viceroy, bringing with him a return to more 'forward' policies, Russo-Persian relations had improved one more, as evidenced by their agreement in 1881. The policy of 'masterly activity' was not as counterproductive as it would seem on the surface and did have its advantages. Because the populations of the Central Asian Khanates between India and Russia, such as Khiva, Bukhara and Khokand, were politically opposed to any European interference in their affairs, whichever side reached their borders first would be required to conquer them if they wished to expand further.[270] By not interfering in the internal affairs of these countries, the proponents of 'masterly inactivity' ensured that Russia would be forced to expend its resources to conquer them before they could reach the borders of India, while because India's borders were not expanding, they could focus all of their resources on defence.[271] Similarly in the case of Persia, the Government of India were able to achieve a more positive relationship with Persia than the East India Company had, by presenting themselves as the peaceful great power in the region and allowing Russia to appear

[270] Ibid, p. 571.
[271] R.B. Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence, Vol 2,* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1883), p. 570.

as the aggressors, whom the Persian Shah feared could invade.[272] But this policy also meant that the Government of India were unwilling to increase their influence with Persia even more by promising to support them militarily in the event of an invasion by Turkey or Russia.[273] Despite not having secured Persia as a 'buffer state' fully under British influence, the Government of India ended the Great Game in a much greater position of influence over Persia than the East India Company had, having essentially neutralised Persia as a threat to India without ever actually going to war with it.

The relationships of the East India Company and the Government of India with Persia epitomise the foreign policies of the two Governments during this time period. The East India Company considered Persia to be a threat after it fell under the influence of Russia after the Russo-Persian War and treated Persia as such from then until the Company's dissolution as a government. The main source of conflict between the Company and Persia was Persia's repeated attempts to annex the city of Herat, which was in a good strategic position to be used as an invasion route to India. As Hopkirk correctly notes, the threat of Russia gaining influence in Persia and using this to secure a foothold in Herat was one of the most important factors driving the fear of Russia in India at the time.[274] Barbara English also accurately identifies Herat as an important strategic point in the defence of India due to its position on the north-west frontier, the only location in which India was vulnerable to invasion.[275] Typical of their foreign policy during this time period, the Company responded to this with the threat of military force, and successfully repelled Persia from Herat on multiple occasions. Though they were successful in keeping this crucial location secure, doing so did not solve the problem of Persia, which remained a threat throughout the Company's rule over India. However, Hopkirk does not focus on the Government of India's relationship with Persia in his analysis of the second half of the Great Game, and English's work focuses specifically on the invasion of Persia by the Company in 1856 in response to the Persian invasion of Herat. As a result, they do not consider that, when the British Government took direct control over the Government of India, the new Government adopted a more diplomatic approach to Persia. Abbas Amanat does acknowledge

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[272] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, The British Library, IOR/C/142, p. 192.
[273] Autograph note addressed by the Shah to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, 12 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 18.
[274] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 167.
[275] English, *John Company's Last War,* pp. 12-13.

this change, though as he is writing from the Persian perspective, he does not go into detail regarding what this meant for the Government of India.[276]

Under their rule, there would be no use of military force against Persia, as the Indian Government took advantage of Persia's worsening relationship with Russia to extend their own political influence into the country. As a result, Persia, which had been a strong ally of Russia under during the time of the East India Company, became a more neutral state in the Great Game. Evgeny Sergeev argues that preventing Russia from using Persia to threaten Afghanistan was one of the Government of India's main priorities, but this was much truer during the time of the East India Company, a period Sergeev does not cover.[277] While still a consideration for the Government of India, Persia was considered more of a weak state to be defended rather than a threat during their time. Although Firuz Kazemzadeh correctly identifies that diplomacy was the primary method used by India in its dealings with Persia after 1864, he does not cover any time prior to this, and therefore does not contrast this with the policies of the East India Company.[278] As a result of the Government of India's patience and diplomacy, the southern half of Persia was eventually recognised even by Russia as being part of Britain's sphere of influence in Asia. Siegel writes that it would be a mistake to assume that the Anglo-Russian Convention which created this division of Persia was only the result of 'Great Power' politics creating alliances in order to counter Germany, as this would ignore the crucial role of India in in the formation of British foreign policy.[279] Hopkirk argued that the division of Persia was the result of the desire to ensure that neither India nor Russia could use Persia as an invasion route against the other.[280] Kazemzadeh wrote that Russia was forced to give up their designs on maintaining influence over all of Persia because it was forced to accept that Russia's importance in Persia had waned, that British influence now dominated the south of Persia, and that Russia did not possess the strength to contest this.[281] Though this was not a complete success, as the northern half of Persia became solidified as under Russia's sphere of influence, it still left the Government of India in a stronger position regarding Persia than the East India Company had been, as Persia had been effectively neutralised as a threat to India.

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[276] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*, p. 354.
[277] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 101.
[278] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, p. viii.
[279] J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002) p. 19.
[280] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* pp. 520-521.
[281] Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: imperial ambitions in Qajar Iran*, p. 486.

Chapter Four: 'Forward' policies and 'Masterly Inactivity': The East India Company and Government of India in Central Asia

Although the Afghan Wars and conflicts with Persia were the most significant wars the East India Company and Government of India fought in their attempts to protect India from the threat of Russia, the region referred to as Central Asia, which was positioned between Russia and India, also became a battleground during the Great Game, though in a different way. In the modern day, Central Asia is generally defined as the region lying between western China and Mongolia to the East, and between Afghanistan and Iran in the south and Russia in the north. In the present, this region includes countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but in the 19th Century, it was home to the Khanate of Khiva, along with Bukhara, Merv, Samarkand, Tashkent and Kokand. These countries and cities, though smaller and less influential than the likes of Persia, represented significant strategic points in the Game due to their location. They lay directly between the borders of Russia and India's most important buffer, Afghanistan, and so were considered additional buffers against Russian expansion. Consequently, Russia's advance into this region was looked upon with concern by the British in India. The purpose of this chapter is to compare the actions of the East India Company and the Government of India in reaction to this advance and demonstrate how British strategy in Central Asia changed after the East India Company was replaced by direct British rule of India.

The East India Company looked to increase their influence in the region through the use of their agents, whom Kipling would romanticise into the spies of *Kim.* In reality these agents acted more like diplomats, though they were in much more danger than this title would imply, with several dying in the line of duty. Russia would respond with its own diplomatic agents, and the region became a political battlefield with both sides attempting to gain influence over the various leaders of these countries. After the 1857 Mutiny, the new government, wary of the mistakes of the Company and fearing another mutiny, took a much more reserved approach, defending only those countries necessary for the defence of India, primarily Afghanistan. In the meantime, Russia embarked on a period of expansion, abandoning the subtle approach in favour of conquering most of Central Asia through military force. Unlike the Company, the Government of India were not focused on conquering new territory or in expanding their own political influence beyond that which was necessary to defend its primary territory in India. This enabled them to conserve their resources, and the Game in Central Asia became a much more defensively minded affair. Their passive approach, however, also allowed Russia to expand its own empire, as it was unwilling to either go to war to prevent this

or seize territory before the Russians could reach it. The diplomatic missions sent to the various nations did not end, but these smaller nations simply did not have the military might necessary to stand up to Russia without direct British support. The British Indian Government after 1857 was driven by its caution in the wake of the Mutiny to rely on diplomacy rather than war. As Council of India member Henry Rawlinson wrote, one of the greatest fears of the Government of India at the time was that the Russian advance through Central Asia would either incite another mutiny.[1] As part of his Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question, Owen Tudor Burne, Secretary to the recently deceased Viceroy Lord Mayo, wrote that from the time of the Mutiny until 1864, the Government of India were focused on rebuilding the army and infrastructure of India, and therefore neglected external policy.[2] Lord John Lawrence, who became Viceroy in 1864, then developed a policy that became known as 'masterly inactivity', focusing on defending India by building up its internal defences and ensuring positive relationships with both the Indians and the peoples of surrounding nations, while not interfering in the affairs of foreign states.[3]

As a result of this caution, Russia made significant gains in territory over the period of 1858-1880, including Chimkent in 1864, Tashkent in 1865, Kokand and Bukhara in 1866, Samarkand in 1868 and Khiva in 1873. This was despite the fact that they were themselves still recovering from their defeat in the Crimean War. While the Crimean War itself resulted in the temporary cessation of Russian advancement in Central Asia, its conclusion led to renewed interest from Russia in the region, due to its natural resources and previously unused trade market.[4] Although the Russian army was greatly reduced by the Crimean War from 2 300 000 members to less than 800 000, the shock of the Russian defeat in Crimea caused Tsar Alexander II to implement extensive reforms to the army, implementing a military district system which would separate armies into different territories rather than reporting directly to the headquarters, allowing them to be mobilised more quickly and efficiently.[5] Though the Russian army was weakened, most of the Central Asian khanates were quite small, and did not have the modern

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[1] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.
[2] Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question from Owen Tudor Burne, 30 April 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 29.
[3] R.B. Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence, Vol 2,* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1883), p. 570.
[4] E. Allworth, *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 131.
[5] B. Eklof, J. Bushnell and L. Zakharova, *Russia's Great Reforms 1855–1881,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 147.

(for the time) military training that the Russians did, and so the Russian military was still superior to that of Bukhara or Khiva.[6]

The Government of India in the period of 1858-1880 can be defined by its opposition to direct conflict. Indeed, it was still in the process of recovering from the chaos of the Mutiny and the restructuring of the army in the wake of the dissolution of the East India Company. Furthermore, by the time the Government of India took over the country, all of India had been conquered, leaving only the surrounding nations as potential targets. As Tim Harrigan wrote in *Murder in the Hindu Kush: George Hayward and the Great Game*: 'On the map of the world India was entirely red. There would be no more great wars of conquest, only border skirmishes and punitive raids.'[7] As a result of this aversion to conflict, the Government of India did not intervene in the invasions of each of these states, and Russia was able to gain control over most of Central Asia unopposed.

How does Central Asia fit into the Historiography of the Great Game?

Evgeny Sergeev places a lot of emphasis on Central Asia in his analysis of the Great Game as he argues that Russia's subjugation of the khanates of Central Asia after the Crimean War initiated the Great Game.[8] Sergeev states that 'this marked the real beginning of the Great Game, in which the two imperial powers struggled to impose their different visions for modernization on the preindustrial, decadent Oriental states.'[9] Sergeev argues that Russian strategists believed that an invasion of India would not only distract British attention from Europe following the Crimean War, but would also instigate Indian rulers to rebel and restore their sovereignty, as the Mutiny of 1857 had proven that this rebellious intent existed in India.[10] Therefore, Russia set out to create several vassal states either under its own political control or backed by Persia, beginning by dispatching diplomatic and reconnaissance missions to areas such as eastern Persia, Herat and eastern Turkestan.[11] Their motivation according to Sergeev was to maintain Russia's status as a great power, and that this desire finally in the 1860s overruled the cautious policy that they had pursued up to that point.[12] He presents

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[6] A. Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion, 1814–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 301.
[7] T. Hannigan, *Murder in the Hindu Kush: George Hayward and the Great Game* (Cheltenham: History Press, 2011), p. 14.
[8] E. Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 65.
[9] Ibid, p. 66.
[10] Ibid, p. 75
[11] Ibid, pp. 79-80.
[12] Ibid, p. 94.

Russian arguments for invasions in Central Asia that are very similar to the arguments made by East India Company policy-makers for invading Asian states prior to 1857, such as Russian General of the Infantry Zimmerman's argument to the Tsar in 1861 that Russia must invade Kokand or it, backed by Britain, would become a problem on Russia's southern frontier.[13] He also presents the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Gorchakov as using the excuse that Russia were on a great civilizing mission in Central Asia, abolishing slavery and 'enlightening' the people of Central Asia.[14] On Britain's response to this, Sergeev writes that it had a 'pacifist' policy towards Russia initially.[15] He argues that, although the policy of 'masterly inactivity' was prevalent at the time, the Indian army and secret service were radically reformed.[16] Nevertheless Sergeev argues that the Government of India were happy to allow Russia to expend its resources in Central Asia because they knew that any invasion of India could only come through Herat.[17]

Sergeev credits the return of more 'forward' policies opposing Russia to Henry Rawlinson who advocated that Russia was hostile and expansionist for thirty years.[18] He argues that Britain's return to these more forward policies began when Yakub Beg, a rebellious general from the Khanate of Kokhand in Central Asia, united five independent Khanates into the Emirate of Yettishar in 1873, becoming the Amir of the new state, at which point British and Russian diplomatic agents competed to establish influence with him.[19] This caused Anglo-Russian relations to deteriorate, and the Russian conquest of Khiva then ensured that the Great Game would not be brought to an end.[20] However, as Sergeev begins his analysis of the Game in 1856, he ignores the aspects of the Game in Central Asia that took place before this. For example, he argues that Russia only began sending out diplomatic missions to Asian states in the 1860s, but Russia had already been doing this in Afghanistan, Persia, Bukhara and Khiva since at least the 1830s. In 1837, the Russian agent Yan Vitkovich was reported by the East India Company's Political Agent, Colonel Charles Stoddart to have been on missions to both Persia and Afghanistan, and was suspected by Stoddart of using the threat of Persia against Herat to coerce the Afghans into working with Russia against Bukhara and Khiva.[21] A report

[13] Ibid, p. 95.
[14] Ibid, p. 100.
[15] Ibid, p. 101.
[16] Ibid, p.p. 102-104.
[17] Ibid, pp. 110-111.
[18] Ibid, p. 123.
[19] Ibid, pp. 135-140.
[20] Ibid, p. 142.
[21] Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Stoddart to Mr McNeil, 14 October 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/1, p. 9.

that Stoddart's fellow Political Agent, Alexander Burnes received from Bukhara indicated that a Russian envoy had come to Bukhara in 1839 to ask that the imprisoned Stoddart be delivered to him.[22] John McNeil, the Envoy to Persia, also received information that Colonel Brontaneff, a Russian agent, was at the court in Bukhara during the imprisonment of the political agents Arthur Conolly and Charles Stoddart.[23]

Peter Hopkirk also focuses heavily on Central Asia in his analysis of the Great Game, however he concentrates more on the diplomatic missions conducted by British Agents, as his work is more about telling the stories of individuals. He writes of one such agent, Arthur Conolly's mission to Khiva in 1831, which he argues was planned to discover what Russia was doing there.[24] Hopkirk argues that Conolly discovered there were actually two viable invasion routes from Russia to India, the first being through Herat as Sergeev argued, and the second being to seize Khiva, then use it as a staging ground for a march across the Hindu Kush to Kabul.[25] He also writes of Alexander Burnes' journey to Bukhara, which he argues also had the secondary objective of investigating whether the Oxus river could be used for sailing by a Russian invasion force.[26] Both of these arguments contradict Sergeev's assertion that the Great Game did not begin until 1856. Hopkirk also writes of how, when Burnes arrived in Bukhara, the vizier, chief political advisor to the Amir, in Bukhara was already familiar with the Russians.[27] Hopkirk also gives the example of how, as the First Afghan War was beginning, Russia had planned an invasion of Khiva, using the excuse that there were Russian slaves being held in Khiva, and that it was no different from what the East India Company were doing in Afghanistan.[28] This invasion was diverted by Company agents James Abbott and Richmond Shakespear, who convinced the Amir of Khiva to release the Russian slaves, thus robbing the Russians of their pretext for invasion.[29] This is again opposed to Sergeev's argument that the Great Game did not begin until 1856, as if the Game had not yet begun, then neither Britain nor Russia would have had any reason to care about Khiva.

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[22] Translation of a letter from Nasir Khan Allah to the envoy at Kabul, translated by Alexander Burnes, 24 September 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 63, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/144, p. 310.
[23] Letter from J. McNeil to the Earl of Aberdeen, 29 April 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 48, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/410, p. 294.
[24] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* (London: John Murray Press, 1990), p. 125.
[25] Ibid, p.130.
[26] Ibid, p. 146.
[27] Ibid, p. 147.
[28] Ibid, p. 203.
[29] Ibid, pp. 225-227.

Hopkirk does, however argue that Russia began a renewed diplomatic mission in Central Asia in 1858, beginning with an expedition to Khiva and Bukhara from Count Nikolai Ignatiev, a Russian diplomat who two years later would become head of its Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Asian Department, attempting to open up Russian trade with those states.[30] These were the missions that Sergeev argued were the beginning of the Great Game, but Hopkirk presents them as just one part of an ongoing series of events. Hopkirk does acknowledge the beginning of the British policy of 'masterly inactivity' beginning with their refusal to send military aid to Kokand when they were invaded by Russia.[31] He agrees with Sergeev that Henry Rawlinson, a member of the Council of India, the chief advisors to the Secretary of State for India, became the principal spokesman for 'forward' policies towards Russia.[32] He also presents Yakub Beg's rise to power as the beginning of the return to these policies, beginning with expeditions to his court by Robert Shaw and George Hayward in 1868, with Hayward's expedition being supported by Rawlinson.[33] These two were not officially affiliated with the Government of India, with Shaw being in Kashgar to seek commercial to seek commercial prospects and Hayward being there on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, but while there, convinced Yakub Beg to send an envoy to India.[34] But Hopkirk also argues that Indian explorers known as Pundits began to be used, under official sanction from the Government of India for these kinds of reconnaissance missions because the Viceroy had banned British officers from doing so, due to the deaths of Conolly and Stoddart on similar missions for the East India Company.[35]

Robert Johnson writes that British observers saw Russia as a threat to India because of its inexorable advance across Central Asia, with its borders moving from 1500 miles away from India in 1839 to only 300 miles away by 1873.[36] He argues that the First Afghan War has overshadowed the significance of political agents James Abbott and Richmond Shakespear's expedition to Khiva in 1840 and Charles Stoddart's expedition to Bukhara beginning in 1838 to convince those city states to release their Russian slaves and rob Russia of its pretext for annexation.[37] Johnson argues that the nature of these missions was unique in that they were not authorised to make official treaties with the khanates or offer British military assistance, and therefore were not attempting to turn them into satellite states, but were proactively

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[30] Ibid, pp. 296-297.
[31] Ibid, p. 303.
[32] Ibid, p. 318.
[33] Ibid, pp. 323-324.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid, pp. 329-330.
[36] R. Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 83.
[37] Ibid, p. 84.

preventing Russia from doing so indicating a desire to use them as buffer states.[38] He also cites Nikolai Ignatiev's expedition to Khiva and Bukhara in 1858 as the beginning of Russian expansion in the region, pointing out that the most important clause discussed with the Amir of Bukhara was the exclusion of all British agents from the state.[39] Johnson goes on to blame the Russian expansion into Central Asia on a desire for imperial prestige and opportunistic forward policies within the Russian army, pointing out examples of Russian officers disobeying orders such as General Cherniaev, who occupied Tashkent in 1865 despite orders from Gorchakov to avoid operations that could bring Russia into collision with Britain.[40] In Johnson's analysis, Central Asia was not a true buffer region for the defence of India regardless of what the British Foreign Office may have believed, because of the ease with which Russia conquered it.[41] He concludes his chapter on Central Asia with the argument that while European disputes may have led to the Crimean War, the genesis of Russophobia in Britain that contributed to that war could be traced back to the Central Asian theatre.[42] This would also seem to contradict Sergeev's argument that the political rivalry between Britain and Russia in Asia was caused by the Crimean War and began in 1856, as Johnson is arguing that the Crimean War was itself caused by the political rivalry between Britain and Russia in Asia. In Johnson's analysis, this rivalry would therefore need to have begun before 1856.

Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac write of an attempt by Russian General V.A. Perovsky to invade Khiva in 1838-1840, in which two thirds of the Russian expeditionary force were wiped out, and after which Russian embassies were sent to Khiva, supposedly to negotiate but actually to prepare maps for a new invasion.[43] This would disagree with Sergeev's argument that Russia's efforts to take control of Central Asia began after the Crimean War. Meyer and Brysac argue that the practice of slavery in Khiva and Bukhara drove the Russian desire to annex those regions, though they suggest that the real source of their anger was not the practice of slavery itself but the abduction and forced conversion to Islam of Russian Christians.[44] They point out that representatives of other nations at the time did not fully believe that this was Russia's true motivation because Russian slave markets had been unofficially tolerated until 1825, and the practice of serfdom, another form of bonded servitude, still existed in Russia until 1861.[45]

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[38] Ibid, p. 87
[39] Ibid, p. 92.
[40] Ibid, pp. 95-96.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] K. Meyer and S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1999), p. 121.
[44] Ibid, p. 123.
[45] Ibid.

Meyer and Brysac also detail Stoddart's expedition into Bukhara in 1838 to gain the freedom of Russian slaves there, and disagree with Johnson by arguing that Stoddart did have instructions to offer British military aid if Bukhara were to be attacked by Russia.[46] They further argue that Shakespear's successful negotiation of the release of 418 Russian prisoners in Khiva in 1840 raised concern in Russia over British influence in the region, and that as a result the Russian envoy Captain Nikiforov was sent to negotiate in Khiva.[47] They further argue that in the 1860s, opinions in India on Russian expansion were split between Henry Rawlinson's 'forward' school, which argued that Russia was a hostile force with designs on India and should be resisted by all possible means, and John Lawrence's school of 'masterly inactivity,' which argued that Russia should be allowed to expend its resources in Central Asia, whose people would grow to resent Russia and not Britain, a school of thought that won out when Lawrence was made Viceroy in 1863.[48] However, they argue that Lawrence's advice was later ignored in the 1870s by his successors as Viceroy as the Russian advance into Central Asia continued.[49]

Gerald Morgan uses the lack of opposition from the Government of India to the Russian advance in Central Asia as evidence that the Great Game did not exist, citing the Viceroy Lord Mayo's refusal to send British officers to Khiva and Bukhara in 1871, despite requests from the leaders of both countries, because of the deaths of Arthur Connolly and Charles Stoddart years before.[50] However, he does write that in 1865, Lawrence sent Indian agents to gather information in Bukhara, Badakhshan, Balkh and Khojend, to ascertain Russian army strengths and the mode of government in these regions.[51] Badakhstan and Balkh were regions of northern Afghanistan, while Khojend was a city in Central Asia, at the time under the control of the Khanate of Bukhara. However, Morgan presents this as an isolated, *ad hoc* event. Morgan notes that when Ignatiev visited Bukhara in 1858, he reported that five British agents had been in the city, and that others had been training the army of the Khanate of Khokand, another of the Central Asian Khanates, but these reports were false.[52] Morgan argues that this kind of misinformation was common to the era on both the British and Russian sides and resulted in the inflation of the legend of the Great Game.[53] Agreeing with Morgan, Malcolm Yapp argues that Britain actively discouraged British officers from travelling in Turkestan after two of them,

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid, p. 125.
[48] Ibid, pp. 154-157.
[49] Ibid, p. 157.
[50] G. Morgan, 'Myth and reality in the great game,' *Asian Affairs Vol 4, No. 1* (1973), p. 60.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid, p. 64.
[53] Ibid.

Conolly and Stoddart, were executed in Bukhara with nothing being able to be done about it.[54] William Macnaghten, the political agent in charge of the occupation of Afghanistan, had wanted to send troops to rescue Stoddart before Conolly's arrival, but was unable to do so because the growing unrest against the occupation in Afghanistan required him to keep all of his troops there.[55] Conolly's arrest and the two's execution took place after the Company's disastrous retreat from Afghanistan, which left the Company unable to launch an expedition into Bukhara without first marching through Afghanistan again, which would have reignited the First Afghan War.[56] Yapp argues that the main arguments in India at the time revolved around 'whether to stand on the existing frontier or move forward into Central Asia; whether to try to form buffer states or to eschew dealings with Central Asia and rely on British power alone; whether to fight in Central Asia or in some other part of the world; whether to oppose Russia or to seek agreement with her.'[57] He argues that because of the failure of the First Afghan War, the debate was tipped in favour of avoiding dealings in Central Asia and finding agreement with Russia until the 1860s, when Russia began expanding into the region.[58] However he argues that concerns in Central Asia were always secondary to those in Europe.[59]

Though his references to Central Asia are limited due to the short time period he considers the Great Game to have taken place in, Edward Ingram does cite Khiva and Bukhara as two of the buffer states that the British hoped to create in Asia.[60] He suggests that the purpose of this was to put pressure on Persia's northern frontier.[61] He also cites Governor-General Lord William Bentinck's attempts to open up a new trade route to Bukhara in 1830 as the beginning of the Great Game.[62] However, he also argues that the Great Game should not be defined as the struggle for Central Asia, but as an aspect of British history rather than international relations.[63] He believes that the actions of the Russians should not be considered part of the Game, saying that the Game was 'an attempt by the British in the 1830s to impose a view on the world'.[64] Though he acknowledges that Britain desired buffer states in Asia to form a

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[54] M. Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2000 Lectures and Memoirs* 111 (2001), 190.
[55] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* pp. 232-233.
[56] Ibid, pp. 278-279.
[57] Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' pp. 187-188.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid, p. 190.
[60] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 165.
[61] Ibid, p. 166.
[62] Ibid, p. 160.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid, pp. 160-161.

barrier between India and Russia, he argues that the Game was a specifically British invention, designed to impose political stability and set borders upon the Asian states surrounding India, and that Russia should not be considered a participant in the Game because it did not have these motivations.[65] However, he also argues that Russia's increasing interest in Asia was the motivation for Britain to do this, and that Britain intended to spread its own influence over Afghanistan, Persia, Khiva and Bukhara before Russia could reach them.[66] He argues that by 1870 the British were on the defensive in Central Asia, and presents this as evidence that the Great Game had already been lost.[67]

Among all of these interpretations of the role of Central Asia in the Great Game, the transition between the East India Company and the direct British rule of India, and its implications for Indian policy towards Central Asia are rarely discussed. Meyer and Brysac give the most focus to the change, saying that 'what Crimea was to Russia, the Great Mutiny was to British India'.[68] They acknowledge that the rule of the East India Company ended at this time and the restructuring of the army that happened as a result, and also the change from a Board of Control and Court of Directors to the Secretary of State for India and Council of India, but do not focus on the implications of these changes.[69] They do argue, however, that the Mutiny heightened British fears of rebellion, conspiracy and foreign interference, with Russia being the most likely suspect.[70] Sergeev argues that the Mutiny changed the state of mind in the region such that there was 'a coalescence of Asian states under Russia's patronage to renounce a British civilizing mission'.[71] He acknowledges that there were reforms in the Anglo-Indian civil service and military government, but does not go into detail, instead focusing on how the Indians and Russians reacted to the Mutiny.[72] Hopkirk makes only a brief reference to the abolition of the Board of Control and establishment of the Secretary of State for India and the reform of the army, but immediately moves on to the next chapter without addressing the implications of this.[73] Johnson argues that the Mutiny made India appear vulnerable to subversion and therefore may have contributed to the renewed Russian advance into Central Asia.[74] However, he mainly addresses the Mutiny only regarding how it affected the

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[65] Ibid, pp. 164-165.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, p. 168.
[68] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India*, p. 151.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid, p. 152.
[71] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 73.
[72] Ibid, pp. 73-75.
[73] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, pp. 291-292.
[74] Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 97.

development of intelligence networks.[75] This chapter will focus on the differences between the East India Company's approach to Central Asia and the British Indian Government's approach after India came under direct British rule.

The East India Company in Central Asia

One of the primary methods that the East India Company would utilise in the Great Game were diplomatic missions to the various nations surrounding India, in an attempt to gain influence over the Amirs there and recruit them as allies against Russia. On other occasions, these missions were conducted in order to prevent Russia from staging invasions of these countries. These missions were conducted by officers of the Company referred to as 'political agents,' who seem to have provided the inspiration for the spy networks referred to in some romanticised depictions of the Great Game. In reality, these political agents were more like diplomats, and did not hide their identities or travel in secret, but rather openly announced themselves to the leaders of the countries they were assigned to negotiate with. Khiva and Bukhara became the two Central Asian states that would receive the most attention from the Company during this time period, and these two khanates had been a concern for the Company for some time. In 1837, Charles Stoddart expressed his concern to the envoy to Persia, John McNeil that the Russian agent, Yan Vitkevich, would induce Afghanistan to work in concert with Russia to attack Khiva and Bukhara.[76]

For example, in 1839, the Company sent James Abbott on a mission to convince Allah Quil Khan, ruler of the Khanate of Khiva, to release some Russian slaves he had held captive, with Abbott arriving in January 1840, shortly after the initial battle of Russia's attempted invasion of Khiva resulted in the retreat of the first group of Russian soldiers.[77] The existence of these slaves was being used by the Russians as justification for war, which the Company sought to counteract in order to prevent the Russians from gaining a stronger foothold in the region by taking control of Khiva. Initially, according to a newsletter distributed by the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, compiling reports from British officials and military officers in various parts of Asia, Allah Quil Khan sent a confidential agent to another of the Company's political agents, Major D'Arcy Todd, asking to establish friendly relations.[78] It also

[75] Ibid, p. 82.
[76] Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Stoddart to Mr McNeil, 14 October 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part I, The National Archives, FO 539/1, p. 9.
[77] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India*, p. 121.
[78] Newsletter from the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, 25 January 1840, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 19, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/381, p. 759.

reports on the initial battle between the Russians and Khivans, reporting that the Khivans were victorious but that it was believed that the soldiers that they defeated were only the advance guard of a much larger army.[79]

While recounting his conversation with the ruler of Persia, Abbott stated that he considered the Company to be the natural ally of all Muslim states, as they provided a barrier between India and Europe.[80] While Abbott was indeed giving the Company too much credit here, this passage still demonstrates the mindset of the Company at the time; that the surrounding nations must become allies to the Company in order to form a barrier around India. Kaye states that the mission to Khiva was decided upon due to 'the menacing attitude which Russia had assumed towards the court of Khiva'.[81] George Lawrence, an officer of the Company who fought in the First Afghan War, also writes of this, saying that while he believed that Russia had just grounds to invade Khiva in order to free the slaves, such an event would be 'embarrassing' to the Company.[82] Due to a lack of understanding of the culture, he failed to secure the release of the slaves, but did convince Allah Quil to allow a British agent to mediate between him and Russia for their release. Kaye blames Yar Mohamed, the vizier of Herat, for the failure of the mission, which is curious considering the lengths to which the Company had previously gone to protect Herat and would again. Kaye alleges that Yar Mohammed took issue with Abbott's commander, Major D'Arcy Todd, for his attempts to end slavery in the region.[83] Kaye had a very low opinion of Yar Mohammed man even going so far as to say that 'in the history of human infamy there is nothing more infamous than the conduct of this man'.[84] Abbott himself also considered Yar Mohammed an enemy of the Company and accuses him of turning the people of Khiva against the Company, but only suggests that his motive was to prevent the alliance between the British and Khiva.[85] He even accuses Yar Mohammed of having spread rumours that Abbott himself was a Russian spy.[86] Lawrence, on the other hand, recalls receiving intelligence from Abbott that the Khan of Khiva was 'very alarmed' about the news of

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[79] Ibid, p. 760.
[80] J. Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, (London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1884), p. 93.
[81] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan,* Volume 2 (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), pp. 51-52.
[82] G. Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajaputana*, (London: J. Murray, 1874), p. 37.
[83] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, p. 51.
[84] Ibid, p. 49.
[85] Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, p. 33.
[86] Ibid, p. 112.

the Russian advance and was, in fact, very anxious to negotiate.[87] This confidence seemed to be misplaced, however, as the initial negotiations did indeed fail. In his own account of the mission, Abbott says that he had informed the Khan that all Russian captives must be released in order for Khiva to expect any aid from the Company. He believed that, though the leadership in Khiva seemed enthusiastic about using his services, they were in fact deceiving him in an attempt to gain the assistance of Britain more cheaply.[88]

According to Kaye, Yar Mohamed was conspiring with the Persian government. Due to this, and as the First Afghan War was still ongoing at this time, Governor-General Auckland and William Macnaghten, political agent to Afghanistan, had considered invading Herat themselves and placing it more directly under their chosen Amir of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja's rule, but eventually decided against it, choosing instead to bribe him into compliance.[89] In fact, it is regarding this instance that Kaye refers to Macnaghten's 'beautiful game of knocking down and setting up kingdoms and principalities'.[90] It is unclear exactly what Kaye believed Yar Mohamed did to prevent the success of Abbott's mission in Khiva; he only states that he 'set about the same dark intrigues which had caused Colonel Stoddart to be cast into captivity at Bokhara'.[91] It should be considered that Kaye, being a former East India Company officer himself, may not have been receptive to the idea that the Company had simply failed in its mission, and was more comfortable blaming the machinations of a foreign official for its failure. At the very least he is engaging in hyperbole when he claims that no man was ever more infamous. His account of Auckland's bribery of Yar Mohamed to ensure that Herat did not fall into Persian hands, however, is more credible, especially as Kaye did not support it and believed it was a waste of resources, primarily due to the fact that he hated Yar Mohamed so much that he believed that no amount of bribery would ever convince him not to sabotage them. However, D'Arcy Todd did also consider Yar Mohammed to be a traitor, as when reporting on the progress of the mission in Khiva, which had by that time been successful, he noted 'the state of affairs here is still unsatisfactory. I have not yet received the instructions of the Right Honourable the Governor-General subsequent to the discovery of the Vizier's late

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[87] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 37.
[88] Abbott, *Narrative of a journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St. Petersburgh, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva. With some account of the court of Khiva and the kingdom of Khaurism, Volume One*, pp. 104-105.
[89] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, pp. 53-54.
[90] Ibid, p. 57.
[91] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1* (London, R. Bentley, 1857-58), pp. 51-52.

treachery.'[92] This is further evidence of the East India Company's concern that a Russia-backed Persia would make inroads into Afghanistan. It is especially significant as this event took place during the period of the First Afghan War when the Company had direct control of Afghanistan itself, and yet even during a time when their army was right on Herat's doorstep, the possibility of a Persian invasion still concerned them.

Though the initial attempt at mediation failed, another political agent, Lieutenant Richmond Shakespear was later able to negotiate the release of 416 Russian captives. A report from D'Arcy Todd from September 1840 confirms that the Russian prisoners have been released and that Shakespear was accompanying them.[93] Todd further reported that the Khan had issued an order to his subjects that no Russian travellers should be harmed, pending negotiations, further discouraging Russia from invading.[94] Kaye cites another letter from Todd speaking of the success of Shakespear's mission to Khiva, in which he states that the Russians 'have given a strong proof that they are unwilling or unable to renew their attempt on Khiva, and I hope that they will now be prevented from taking up that formidable position on the road to India.'[95] Russia would not invade Khiva until the time of the Government of India, decades later, so this should be considered a victory in the Great Game for the Company. It may have taken longer than they had expected, but they did accomplish their objective.

A far less successful mission for the East India Company was that of Stoddart and Conolly to Bukhara, a journey that would lead to the deaths of both men. Stoddart was the first dispatched to Bukhara in 1838, in a similar mission to that that Abbott and Shakespear had conducted, namely the rescue of a group of Russian prisoners. However, Stoddart had actually already been arrested and released once by the Amir, Nasrullah Khan, before the arrest that would lead to his death.[96] Kaye does not specify exactly what Stoddart did to be imprisoned the second time, only saying that the Amir of Bukhara was capricious. As previously mentioned, he would later state that Yar Mohammed of Persia had 'set about the same dark intrigues which had caused Colonel Stoddart to be cast into captivity at Bokhara', indicating that he may have suspected him of having something to do with Stoddart's imprisonment as well.[97] However, as Kaye seemed to believe Yar Mohammed was behind almost every problem

[92] Letter from E. D. Todd to L. R. Reid, Chief Secretary to the Government, Bombay, 9 September 1840, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 26, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/388, p. 11.
[93] Ibid, p. 10.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 1*, p. 111.
[96] Ibid, pp. 39-40.
[97] Ibid, pp. 51-52.

the East India Company had, this does not seem likely. As an officer of the Company, Kaye was not particularly inclined to give one of its enemies the benefit of the doubt, and his sympathies towards Stoddart are clear. This does, however, continue to demonstrate the Company's distrust of a Russian-influenced Persia.

Lawrence also recalls his discouragement at hearing the news of Stoddart's imprisonment and makes the interesting comment that the only way to check Russia's designs on Central Asia, would be for the British Government to negotiate with the Russian Government directly. He further stated that the Company in isolation did not have the military or negotiating power to do so.[98] Soon afterwards, Dost Mohammed Khan, fleeing from his defeat in the First Afghan War, was also imprisoned in Bukhara. In a letter to Burnes, Macnaghten notes that he did not believe Dost Mohammed Khan would ever be able to work with the Amir of Bukhara, and this proved true when Dost Mohammed was imprisoned.[99] This would have been a positive for the East India Company, and yet, despite that, Macnaghten wrote to Burnes again, suggesting an expedition to Bukhara to rescue Stoddart, despite the risks of having the state become allied to Dost Mohammed Khan.[100] A newsletter distributed by the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, compiling reports from British officials and military officers in various parts of Asia, did report that Stoddart was planned to be sent to Russia by the Amir, but that this was abandoned because of the news of the Russian advance against Khiva.[101] This is corroborated by a letter that Alexander Burnes received from Bukhara in 1839 stating that a Russian agent had come to Bukhara and asked for Stoddart to be turned over to him, but that the Khan had declined to give him an answer.[102]

In the end, Macnaghten decided against an invasion, and instead Conolly was sent to negotiate Stoddart's release, arriving in November 1841. Lawrence writes that Lord Auckland 'wisely set his face against any forward movement' indicating that it was he who insisted on not invading Bukhara.[103] Before his arrival, the Amir allowed Stoddart to send letters to Connolly, as well as translating letters of his own. In one of these, Stoddart expressed optimism that the Amir may

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[98] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 38.
[99] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 2*, pp. 40-41.
[100] Ibid, pp. 42.
[101] Newsletter from the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, 25 January 1840, Enclosures from Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 19, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/381, p. 759.
[102] Translation of a letter from Nasir Khan Allah to the envoy at Kabul, translated by Alexander Burnes, 24 September 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 63, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/144, p. 310.
[103] Lawrence, *Reminiscences of Forty-three Years in India: Including the Cabul Disasters, Captivities in Affghanistan and the Punjaub, and a Narrative of the Mutinies in Rajputana*, p. 36.

still be able to be convinced to have friendly relations with the British.[104] In a letter to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, Stoddart assured him that the Amir was expressing daily his desire for a peace treaty.[105] He reiterated this in a letter to the Secretary of the Government of India, adding that the Amir was 'very eager' to receive a reply offering a peace treaty, but also worries that 'his fears make him uneasy'.[106] In a subsequent letter to Palmerston, Stoddart notes that the titles used to address the British in his letter 'are superior to those used by the Amir in addressing the Emperor of Russia'.[107] Stoddart even claims that the Amir had promised that he would use his best efforts to support and forward the interests and objects of the British.[108] Stoddart reports that the Naib (meaning deputy or second in command, also sometimes spelled Neyeb) had met with the Amir and assured him of the truth of the messages that Stoddart had brought with him upon his initial arrival, which warned of the designs of the Russians and Persians against Bukhara, and counselled him to release the Russians in captivity, and that it was in the best interest of both the British and the Bukharans to keep Russia back.[109] Stoddart does not specify a name here, but according to the missionary Joseph Wolff, who later visited Bukhara looking for Stoddart and Conolly, the Naib at the time was Abdul Samut Khan.[110] According to Stoddart, the Naib also counselled the Amir that Russia had previously marched on Khiva but been compelled to withdraw by the intervention of British agents (Abbott and Shakespear).[111]

A letter from the Amir to Queen Victoria herself was also transmitted by Stoddart to India, in which the Amir admitted to have treated with Russian agents who had frequently visited his kingdom.[112] He goes on to say that he had come to understand the 'depravity and ambitious intentions' of Russia, and meant to have nothing more to do with them.[113] He expressed his

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[104] Letter from C. Stoddart to A. Connolly, 29 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p.3.
[105] Letter from C. Stoddart to Lord Palmerston, 15 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 8.
[106] Letter from C. Stoddart to the Secretary for the Government of India, 17 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 9.
[107] Letter from C. Stoddart to Lord Palmerston, 16 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 11.
[108] Ibid, p. 12.
[109] Ibid, p. 13.
[110] J. Wolff*, Narrative of a mission to Bokhara, in the years 1843-1845, to ascertain the fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly*, (London: J.W. Parker, 1845), p. 336.
[111] Letter from C. Stoddart to Lord Palmerston, 16 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 13.
[112] Translation of a Letter from the King of Bukhara to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, translated by Alexander Burnes 16 June 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 26.
[113] Ibid, p. 26.

desire to have friendly relations with the British from that point on.[114] However, Conolly's negotiations failed, and Conolly was also captured. In his journal, Conolly writes that when he first arrived, he and Stoddart were treated well for a month, but that the Amir became concerned that he had received no reply to his letter, and that the two received word that they were both distrusted.[115]

On the 24th of June 1842, both officers were executed. Prior to his death, Stoddart's letters become much less optimistic, Kaye relates a report from a boy named Saleh Mohamed who was employed by D'Arcy Todd, and supposedly witnessed the execution. He claims that both men were offered the opportunity to convert to Islam in order to save their lives, that Stoddart accepted, but was killed anyway, and that Conolly, knowing this, refused when the time came for his execution.[116] However, it would seem that this report was not initially fully trusted, as a missionary, Joseph Wolff, set out to determine the truth of their fates, writing his findings in a book after his return in 1845, in which he writes that he was initially given conflicting reports indicating that the two may have still been alive.[117] However, Wolff learned from Naib Abdul Samnut Khan that the two had indeed been put to death.[118]

This still does not tell us much about the reasoning behind their initial arrests or executions, however. Several of Conolly's letters and journals were eventually retrieved, and in them he wrote that the Amir seemed to suspect him and Stoddart of being spies, sent to map out the land so that they may one day invade as they had done Afghanistan.[119] In one of his own letters from before Conolly's arrival, Stoddart claims that 'false reports of the people' induced the Amir to keep him in captivity and that 'the councillors of the King (Amir) had formerly reported to him that I was not a respectable man but had come as a spy to glean information of the country'.[120] Wolff was told by Abdul Samut Khan that the Amir had them killed because 'they are spies, and as spies they must die.'[121] John McNeil, the envoy to Persia, wrote to George Hamilton Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen, who had just been appointed the new Foreign

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[114] Ibid, p. 27.
[115] Journal entry by A. Conolly, 17 February 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 48, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/410, p. 300.
[116] J.W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3* (London: R. Bentley, 1857-58), p. 257.
[117] Wolff*, Narrative of a mission to Bokhara, in the years 1843-1845, to ascertain the fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly*, pp. 260-261.
[118] Ibid, p. 344.
[119] Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan, Volume 3*, p. 256.
[120] Letter from C. Stoddart to Lord Palmerston, 9 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 21.
[121] Wolff*, Narrative of a mission to Bokhara, in the years 1843-1845, to ascertain the fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly*, p. 344.

Secretary, that he suspected Conolly had been imprisoned, and Stoddart re-imprisoned, because he never received a reply from the Queen and because he had become emboldened by news of the Company's defeat at Kabul during the First Afghan War.[122] McNeil believed that the Amir would continue to hold Conolly and Stoddart until he received a letter from the Queen, written in Persian, promising friendly intentions towards Bukhara.[123] He continues that 'Colonel Stoddart's attempts to explain to the Amir that there were none of her Majesty's ministers who could write a Persian letter…served only to convince him that Colonel Stoddart was attempting to deceive him.'[124]

Only two months before the two officers' deaths, McNeil opined that they were in no danger, as the Amir intended to use them as leverage to acquire an assurance that there would be no hostile attempts upon Bukhara.[125] He wrote that he believed that the Amir refused to allow Stoddart and Conolly to leave Bukhara without obtaining such an assurance because the two had become well acquainted with his country and his people, and would therefore know his weaknesses.[126] He also confirmed that there was a Russian agent, Colonel Brontaneff, in the Bukharan court at this time, though his information from Noor Allah Khan, a friend of Stoddart, suggested that Brontaneff's position was not an influential one.[127] In his journal, Conolly also expresses his belief that the Company's defeat in Afghanistan was the turning point that caused the Amir to arrest them, believing that they had been cut off from their support.[128] Conolly also writes that the Amir accused him of using his previous journeys to Khiva and Kokand as an opportunity to turn those two khanates against Bukhara.[129]

Ironically, the Amir seems to have believed in the same concept of the Great Game that Kipling presented in his novel, *Kim,* namely that the Company were sending spies disguised as travellers to map out the land in Central Asia in order to counter the Russians. Nevertheless, this incident stands out as a clear failure of the East India Company in the true Great Game. The Amir of Bukhara had been an enemy of Dost Mohammed, and so allying with him should have been simple. Even with the failure of the First Afghan War, Bukhara could still have served as a buffer against Russian influence in the region, but instead, the Company achieved

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[122] Letter from J. McNeil to the Earl of Aberdeen, 29 April 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 48, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/410, p. 294.
[123] Ibid, p. 295.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid, p. 296.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Journal entry by A. Conolly, 17 February 1842, Enclosures to Secret Letters to Bombay, Vol 48, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/410, p. 301.
[129] Ibid, p. 302.

nothing but getting two of their men killed. This was not as significant a failure as the First Afghan War, as Bukhara was not as key strategically as Afghanistan, but it was a failure, nonetheless. Conolly, the man who had first used the term Great Game, had died a fairly meaningless death, just two years later, for all his idealistic plans for 'civilising' central Asia. While drawing up a potential plan of attack against Russia in 1878, the Major-General of the Government of India, G. I. Wolseley, noted that Sir Charles Napier had suggested launching an attack on Bukhara after the end of the First Afghan War to avenge Conolly and Stoddart, and believed that Napier was too cautious to have suggested such a thing unless he believed it to be a certain victory.[130] However such an attack never took place, as it would be impossible for an army to march from India to Bukhara without endangering the fragile peace with Afghanistan.[131]

These examples demonstrate that the East India Company were invested in preventing Russia from gaining influence in Central Asia prior to 1856, which contradicts Sergeev's argument that the Great Game did not begin until that time.[132] If the Great Game can be defined as the political rivalry between British India and Russia for influence in Asia, then these East India Company missions to prevent Russia from gaining control of areas of Central Asia must be considered part of it. The fact that Khiva was considered a priority for defence at this time supports Hopkirk's argument that it was considered by the Company to be a viable invasion route to use as a staging ground for a march across the Hindu Kush to Kabul and from there to India.[133] These missions also support Edward Ingram's argument that Khiva and Bukhara were two of the buffer states that the British hoped to create in Asia prior to the First Afghan War.[134]

'Masterly Inactivity' and the Russian Advance

In contrast to the East India Company's aggressive approach to Central Asia, the Government of India were mostly passive and diplomatic in their dealings with surrounding nations. Following the disruption of the 1857 Mutiny, the new government adopted a policy known by its supporters as the 'closed borders' policy. However, its detractors mockingly named it 'masterly inactivity' which would become the name most commonly used to refer to it. It was

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[130] Memorandum from G.I. Wolseley, 30 March 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, IOR/C/141, p. 18.
[131] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* pp. 278-279.
[132] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 65.
[133] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, p. 130.
[134] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 165.

essentially a policy on non-interference, intended to allow India to strengthen its own internal security to ensure there would never be another Mutiny. Russia, however, became much more aggressive during this time period. In 1864, Russia annexed Chimkent, along with several other small towns and forts under the control of the Khan of Kokand, closing a gap in their southern frontier 500 miles wide.[135] This partially stemmed from by the destabilisation of the region caused by the arrival of the Turkmen tribes driven out of Persia by the Shah. This instability caused Russia to begin an invasion for fear that the Government of India, or one of the other surrounding countries such as Khiva or Bukhara, would get to it first, leaving them vulnerable.[136] When the Khan begged the Government of India for help, he discovered that they had already begun their policy of 'masterly inactivity', limiting their frontier activity only to the regions directly on India's frontiers.

Disillusioned by the effects of the 1857 Mutiny, the Government of India were now focusing on internal matters and had abandoned the 'buffer states' that the Company had been so determined to defend. That was not to say that there was no disagreement on how to proceed. Some advocated 'forward' policies, that is advancing north to meet the Russian advance. The most extreme of these wanted to march all the way to the Hindu Kush.[137] However, the 'masterly inactivity' school of thought won out. This group was led by Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy from 1864-1869, and argued that the best way for the Government of India to defend India was to build up its own defences while winning the hearts of the people, without interfering in foreign affairs, thus presenting a united front if the Russians did arrive.[138] After all, the farther Russia had to march and the more countries that they had to conquer before reaching India, the easier they would be to defeat, as the populations of the Central Asian Khanates between India and Russia, such as Khiva, Bukhara and Khokand, were politically opposed to any European interference in their affairs, and would need to be fought and defeated by whichever side expanded its borders to them first.[139] Lawrence believed that by proving to the governments surrounding India that the Government of India had no desire to interfere in their internal affairs in any way, they could ensure that they would not turn to Russia for protection, and would instead ally with the Government of India for protection against Russia.[140] Lawrence further argued that the only real way that Russia could invade India

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[135] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 303.
[136] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 96.
[137] T.A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1980), p. 85.
[138] Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence, Vol 2,* p. 570.
[139] Ibid, p. 571.
[140] Ibid. p. 574.

would be via Herat, and that therefore, allowing them to deplete their resources attacking countries from which an invasion of India could never come would be an advantage to the Government of India.[141] He also suggested that the further Russia extended its power, and the greater the area it occupied, the more vulnerable points would be exposed within it.[142]

To ensure that they were not seen as warmongers, the Russian Prince Gorchakov released a memorandum claiming that the Russians had only carried out the expansion for their own security and vowed to go no further.[143] A report on Russia in Central Asia by Owen Tudor Burne, personal Secretary to two Viceroys of India, Lords Mayo and Lytton, noted that Gorchakov had promised that Russian territory would not be expanded 'either on the side of Bokhara or on that of Krasnovodsk and the Attrek', but that he also said, while Afghanistan was a state outside the sphere of Russian action, the intervening countries between Afghanistan and Russia's own holdings in Turkestan were not.[144] Despite this, in 1865, the Russians continued to Tashkent, also under the control of Kokand, which had been a very wealthy trading partner of Russia up until that point. This city had been the subject of a dispute between Kokand and Bukhara, and Russia used this as an opportunity to take the city out from under both of them. Interestingly, the Russian commander, General Mikhail Cherniaev, carried out the invasion independently, without the permission of his government, for which he was rewarded by the Tsar after his success.[145] This is an interesting parallel with the way in which the East India Company carried out its own expansions, in which their officers also sometimes acted independently in this way, operating not just without the permission of the government but also their own commanding officers. But in those cases, such as that of Charles Napier and the Sind, the officers were not necessarily rewarded for their efforts, even if they were successful. Of course, news of the annexation of Tashkent caused concern in Britain and India, as Russia had broken the pledge by Prince Gorchakov that Russia would expand no further, only a year after it had been made. But once again, the Government of India did not make any aggressive countermoves.

In 1866, Russia completed its conquest of Kokand, while also beginning its annexation of Bukhara, after a group of Russian missionaries were imprisoned there. In Bukhara, this was

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[141] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, pp. 110-111.
[142] Ibid, pp. 110-111.
[143] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 13 August 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, IOR/C/141, p. 199.
[144] Memorandum from O.T. Burne to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, IOR/C/142, p. 182.
[145] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* pp. 307-311.

done in concert with an internal revolt led by imams who blamed their head of state for the lack of response towards their calls for holy war against Russia, with the Russian conquest being given the excuse of 'restoring order', the exact same excuse that the East India Company had used to annex the Punjab years earlier.[146] This lends credence to the Government of India's fear that Russia would cause a similar event to the 1857 Mutiny and use it as an opportunity to invade Afghanistan or India. They continued to invade Samarkand in 1868, resulting in Bukhara becoming a vassal state of Russia. In 1869, Lord Clarendon, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Baron Brunnow, the Russian ambassador in London, met to discuss relations between Britain and Russia in the region, agreeing that Afghanistan would not be sufficient as a neutral territory between the two governments as the frontiers were too ill defined.[147] In Clarendon's opinion, disputes between the Russians and the chiefs on the Afghan frontier would inevitably arise and Russia would then be compelled to invade.[148] Instead, Khiva was chosen as the neutral territory that would be used as the boundary through which neither army would be allowed to cross.[149] The *Moscow Gazette*, in response to reported correspondence between the Indian Government and Amir Sher Ali Khan of Afghanistan, suggested that Russia should have no interest in the relationship between Britain and Afghanistan, just as the relationship between Russia and Bukhara should be of no interest to Britain.[150]

Prince Gorchakov suggested that Britain should use its influence with Sher Ali to prevent him from being a threat to both Persia and Bukhara.[151] A conversation between Sir Andrew Buchanan, British Ambassador to Russia, and the Tsar of Russia confirmed this, as Buchanan reported that though the Tsar was convinced of the good of the friendly policy of the British Government, he did not have as much confidence in the Indian Government, fearing that they were encouraging Sher Ali to contemplate the conquest of Bukhara.[152] Buchanan assured the Tsar that the Indian Government was under the direct control of the British Government and that no such policy would be allowed.[153] In a follow-up conversation between Clarendon and

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[146] Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 96.
[147] Letter from the Foreign Office to Mr Rumbold, 17 April 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 3.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Letter from Mr Rumbold to the Foreign Office, 21 April 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 4.
[151] Letter from Mr Rumbold to the Foreign Office, 1 June 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 5.
[152] Letter from Sir Andrew Buchanan to the Foreign Office, 26 July 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 5.
[153] Ibid, p. 5.

Gorchakov, the former pointed out that with the addition of Samarkand, all of Bukhara was under Russian control, and that to advance any further into the Hindu Kush could only be motivated by aggression on the part of Russia.[154] Gorchakov again blamed all aggression on Russia's part on military commanders exceeding their orders in the hope of gaining glory, and stated that all of these had since been recalled and would be no more trouble.[155]

However, Gorchakov disliked the idea of using the river Oxus, which formed a natural barrier between Afghanistan and Bukhara, as the demarcation for the border of the neutral zone, as some lands below it had been claimed by the Amir of Bukhara, and therefore could cause the British and Russian Governments to come into conflict.[156] The Government of India issued an assurance that Sher Ali had no hostile intentions against either Persia or Bukhara, and that they would advise him against ever taking such a course.[157] This exchange is interesting in that it demonstrates just how quickly the post-1857 Indian Government accepted Bukhara as part of Russia's sphere of influence in the region. Not only did they acknowledge that Bukhara should remain under the control of Russia, but they also gave assurances that they would prevent other Asian powers such as Afghanistan from attempting to claim it from Russia. At the same time, they also defined Khiva as the new neutral zone that the Russian army would not be allowed to cross, and yet when Khiva was later invaded by Russia, they still provided no military aid, ignoring their agreement in these meetings.

While British fears of Russian invasion remained, during this time it was believed, especially by Governor-General John Lawrence, that India's best defence against this threat was to focus on its internal defences and not to interfere in Central Asia.[158] As his rival, Rawlinson wrote, Lawrence believed that the greatest threat posed by a Russian invasion of India was that it could cause the Indian army to mutiny once again, and that by allowing Russia to appear as the aggressor in the region, this danger could be mitigated.[159] Sergeev argues that this period should be considered the true beginning of the Great Game because it was during this time that Russia began its conquest of Central Asia.[160] Apart from the examples of Russia already

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[154] Letter from the Foreign Office to Sir Andrew Buchanan, 3 September 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 8.
[155] Ibid, p. 9.
[156] Ibid, p. 10.
[157] Letter from the Foreign Office to Sir Andrew Buchanan, 14 September 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 12.
[158] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 103-104.
[159] Ibid, p. 282.
[160] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp. 79-80.

attempting similar invasions during the time of the East India Company that were discussed in the previous section of the chapter, it is also interesting that Sergeev chooses the period of time during which the British participated the least in the Great Game as its beginning. If not for events that would occur after Lytton's appointment to the position of Viceroy in 1877, it would almost seem that the Government of India had given up on the Great Game by this time. This lack of participation would not last, however, as Russia's continued advance and increasing Russophobia in India would soon bring about a resurgence in the 'forward' school of thought in the Government of India, though only to an extent. Even after this change, the Government of India's participation in the Great Game in Central Asia would remain less combative than that of the East India Company.

The Return of 'Forward' Policies?

Sergeev has argued that the Government of India first adopted 'forward' policies towards Russia after the formation of the Emirate of Yettishar under Yakub Beg in 1865.[161] Yakub Beg had previously worked for the Khanate of Kokand, and had been present at Tashkent during the Russian invasion.[162] As Russia were invading, Yakub Beg left the battle with his army and used it to take control of the cities of Kashgar, Yarkand and Maralbashi, which had been previously held by the Chinese, using these as the basis of his new Emirate.[163] In the modern day, these cities are on the westernmost edge of China, on the border with modern day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan, which during the 19th century would have left them close to the Sind, Punjab, Bukhara and Kokand, all important regions for the Government of India and Russia. Peter Hopkirk also argued that the formation of Yettishar was the cause of the Government of India beginning to adopt 'forward' policies, citing the expeditions of Robert Shaw and George Hayward, in 1868, who though they were not officially employed by the Government of India, still negotiated with Yakub Beg to allow a diplomatic mission into his country from the Government of India, though this would not happen until 1874.[164] In 1868, T.D. Forsyth, Commissioner of Jullundur, wrote in a memorandum that Yarkand could be used as a neutral ground for British and Russian traders to meet without fear of attack, as Yakub Beg would not want to incur the enmity of either power by allowing the merchants to come to

[161] Ibid, pp. 135-140.
[162] H. Kim, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 82-83.
[163] Ibid, pp. 83-88.
[164] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 323-324.

harm.[165] He also suggested that, should Russia occupy Eastern Turkestan, it would be necessary to have a political agent in Yarkand or Kashgar.[166]

Hopkirk writes that during that same year, Robert Shaw and George Hayward each separately travelled to Kashgar and Yarkand, with Shaw doing so for commercial purposes, while Hayward desired to map the area.[167] As Hopkirk himself points out, these two were not at the time government employees, though Hayward's journey had been financed by Rawlinson, as at the time, government employees were forbidden from leaving the borders of India.[168] Therefore their expedition cannot be seen as an extension of Government of India policy, quite the opposite, in fact. Nonetheless, while there they became convinced that Russia was planning an invasion of Kashgar, and upon their return to India, having been given an invitation from Yakub Beg for a diplomatic mission to come to Kashgar, expressed this to the new Viceroy Lord Mayo.[169] By this time John Lawrence, the chief proponent of 'masterly inactivity' had retired. Lord Mayo assigned Forsyth to lead the diplomatic mission, which Shaw would also join. However, the initial mission turned back after learning that Yakub Beg was fighting off an incursion by the Tunganis (known in the modern day as Dungan), the Muslim inhabitants of Kashgar who had been politically opposed to both their former Chinese rulers and Yakub Beg, as they had orders not to proceed if any disturbances were taking place.[170] In 1872 an envoy from Kashgar arrived in India, but no progress was made as Lord Mayo had recently died and his replacement not yet arrived in India.[171] Finally in 1874, Forsyth returned to negotiate a commercial treaty with Yakub Beg, a negotiation which succeeded.[172] In Forsyth's own confidential report of his mission, he expresses concern that there are many in Kashgar who had fled Kokand because of the Russian invasion, and left their families behind, meaning that they may be subject to undue influence by the Russians.[173] He also expressed concern that the new Emirate would not be able to survive after Yakub Beg's death, which later proved

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[165] Memorandum by Mr Forsyth on relations with Central Asia and Russia, 2 November 1868, Abstracts of Letters from India 1868, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/CA8, p. 482.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, pp. 323-324.
[168] Ibid, p. 324
[169] Ibid, pp. 336-337.
[170] Memorandum by R.B. Shaw on the present condition of affairs in Eastern Turkestan, 10 April 1876, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 245.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Confidential Report from Sir Douglas Forsyth, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 252.

correct.[174] He argues that Kashgar was very vulnerable to an invasion from Russia, and suggested that the only way to avoid this is to ensure that Yakub Beg give no possible justification for Russia to invade.[175]

In 1874, Lord Mayo's replacement as Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, appointed Robert Shaw to reside at the court in Kashgar, though he was as yet unsure as to whether a permanent representative would be appointed.[176] Northbrook instructed Shaw that, should there be any complications between Yakub Beg and the Russian Government, he was to instruct him to take no action that could lead to conflict.[177] Shaw was also instructed not to do or say anything which would give rise to an impression that his appointment was permanent.[178] In 1875, Henry Rawlinson wrote of the benefits that an alliance with Yakub Beg could provide, saying that if a confederacy between him, the Persians and the Afghans were promoted, it would present an unassailable defence.[179] In March 1875, Lord Derby, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also met with the Russian ambassador Count Schouvaloff, and was confronted with reports that, having entered into an alliance with Yakub Beg, the British were supplying arms and military instructors to Kashgar, with the aim of using them as an alliance against Russia.[180] Derby replied that these reports must be false and that the only objectives that the British had in the region were exploration and the opening of trade.[181] This does indeed appear to be an example of the Government of India utilising 'forward' policy towards Russia, and enacting strategies similar to those used by the East India Company in Khiva and Bukhara, albeit hesitantly so, as Shaw was indeed recalled to India in 1875.[182] Shaw's mission in Kashgar had been to ensure the ratification of the treaty between Yakub Beg and Lord Northbrook.[183] Even

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[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid, p. 253.
[176] Confidential letter from the Governor-General in Council, 2 June 1874, Abstracts of letters from India 1874, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/CA14, p. 137.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Confidential letter from the Governor-General in Council, 15 September 1874, Abstracts of letters from India 1874, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/CA14, p. 214.
[179] Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia*, p. 272.
[180] Report on Conversation between Lord Derby and Count Schouvaloff regarding the position of the British and Russian Governments in respect to the Central Asian Question in March 1875, compiled by T.C. Plowden, Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 1878, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 41.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Report on Mr R. B. Shaw's proceedings in Kashgar in 1874-1875 prior to his return to India, compiled by T.C. Plowden, Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 1878, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 136.
[183] Ibid, pp. 136-137.

after his return, the Government of India were still unsure whether a permanent exchange of envoys would be a good policy to pursue, as they were uncertain if the Russian Government would object.[184] In 1877 Yakub Beg died, though the circumstances of his death were disputed.[185] Soon afterwards, his territories were reclaimed by the Chinese, preventing either the British or the Russians from using them as leverage against each other.

These forward policies would not, however, be applied to Khiva. In 1873, despite the Russian Ambassador Baron Brunnow's assurances that it would be viewed as neutral ground, Russia moved on to invade Khiva, the last of the independent Khanates in their path. Brunnow had objected in his meeting with Lord Clarendon, the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, from 1869 that if the Khan of Khiva became aware that he had nothing to fear from invasion from Russia, he would become troublesome.[186] Clarendon had suggested that should Russia be compelled to invade Khiva, they should be relied upon to return to the conditions of the agreement as soon as possible.[187] Until this point, the Government of India had continued with its policy of masterly inactivity, but now they had started to worry. With each invasion, the border of the Russian Empire moved closer and closer to that of the Government of India. Robert Johnson wrote in *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* that anxieties about Russian ambition in Central Asia were magnified in the 1870s once Khiva, Bokhara and Samarkand had been annexed, and suggests that the main fear was that Russia intended to incite the peoples of India and Afghanistan to revolt in a repeat of the 1857 Mutiny.[188] However, he acknowledges that opinions on the matter were mixed and that some felt that the reactions to the Russian expansion were alarmist. Of their own expansion, Prince Gorchakov claimed that it must be done in the name of frontier security, but the British Ambassador to St Petersburg, Lord Augustus Loftus, instead believed that the issue was Russia's large standing army, which required opportunities for wealth and glory in order to

[184] Report on conversations between the Envoy and the Foreign Secretary, December 1876, compiled by T.C. Plowden, Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 1878, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 142.
[185] Report on the Death of the Amir Yakub Khan of Kashgar and various accounts of succeeding events, compiled by T.C. Plowden, Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 1878, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Biluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 155.
[186] Letter from the Foreign Office to Mr Rumbold, 17 April 1869, Proceedings in Central Asia, Volume 8 (Jan-Nov 1872), The National Archives, FO 65/874, p. 3.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947*, p. 24.

remain satisfied.[189] Hopkirk concurs with this interpretation, also adding that the army was eager to expunge the memory of their defeat in the Crimean War.[190]

Anthony Verrier suggests that, while the Russian advance through Central Asia was a cause for concern, the revived fear of Russia in India in the 1960s was actually the result of a false assertion that Russia was planning to use the Emirate of Yettishar as an invasion route by Robert Shaw and George Hayward.[191] With all of this in mind, unease among the British was beginning to rise. However, it was difficult for the Government of India to raise an effective protest, for after all, hadn't they just inherited the land the East India Company conquered throughout India? Hadn't the Sind and the Punjab been added to that territory just two decades earlier? If the Government of India were to advocate that Russia should give up its conquered territories, they would also be saying the same of themselves by extension. Gorchakov certainly thought so, as he directly compared Russia's own conquests to British rule in India.[192] In this way the expansionist tendencies of the East India Company came back to haunt the Government of India.

Meanwhile, however, the likes of Rawlinson were urging the Government of India to abandon the policy of masterly inactivity. However, even at this point, Rawlinson did not argue that the Government of India should go to war to prevent Russia's advance, instead arguing that they should ally with Sher Ali Khan of Afghanistan and use him as their buffer to stem the Russian advance.[193] When Gorchakov met with British Foreign Secretary Lord Clarendon at Heidelburg, he was asked point-blank whether the Russian expansions had been ordered by Tsar Alexander. Amazingly, he claimed that every single one of the expansions, not just the annexation of Tashkent, had been done without orders from above by soldiers looking to make a name for themselves.[194] Of course, that did not mean that he planned to give the territories back. Gorchakov also promised that Russia had no plans to advance further into Central Asia, and no desire to invade India. Of course, he had made a similar promise before, and that promise had been broken just a year later, so it was difficult to believe him. By 1873, Khiva, too, had fallen to the Russians. In 1869 Lord Clarendon had suggested to Baron Brunnow that the upper Oxus, which belonged to the Khan of Khiva and was mostly desert, be designated as

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[189] Ibid, p. 95.
[190] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 301.
[191] A. Verrier, *Francis Younghusband and the Great Game,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), p. 25.
[192] Ibid.
[193] F. Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India,* (London: Bentley and Son, 1898), p. 308.
[194] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 301.

a neutral zone which neither British nor Russian soldiers would be allowed to cross.[195] However, Brunnow replied that he did not have the authority to agree to such a measure, and doubted that his government would allow it, as Khiva would be south of that border, and 'if the Khan came to understand that his country, being regarded as neutral, had nothing to fear from Russian invasion, he might become extremely troublesome, and the Russian Government could hardly be expected to enter into any engagement that would preclude them from chastising the Khan for the offences he might commit'.[196] The Russian government were pre-emptively justifying any future invasion of Khiva at this time, which could indicate that the invasion was already planned.

In November of 1869, due to unrest in the Kirghize steppes, a vast stretch of grassland in modern day Kazakhstan which in 1869 was under the control of Russia, but was inhabited by Kazakh Muslims who resisted Russian rule, it was suggested that Russia would need to construct a fort in the bay of Krasnovodsk, a location between Persia and Khiva from which it would be easy to march an army into Khiva.[197] When Andrew Buchanan asked Gorchakov about it, Gorchakov claimed that it was only a factory, which would of course need to be protected by a small force of soldiers.[198] While Buchanan claimed that the fort would need to be built on either Khivan or Persian territory, Gorchakov denied this, claiming that neither Khiva nor Persia had ever claimed sovereignty over the Turkoman tribes of that region.[199] Further, an extract from the *Moscow Gazette* stated that it was indispensably necessary for Russia to establish direct communication with the Oxus, and that the Khan of Khiva should be induced to provide that communication, by force if necessary.[200] The extract uses very combative language, such as 'the self-delusion of Asiatic despots is so great, that it gives way only before bitter experience'.[201] In December of 1869 Gorchakov again denied Russia's intentions to invade Khiva, insisting again that they only intended to establish a factory protected by a small garrison at Krasnovodsk, unless the Khan of Khiva provoked them.[202] Buchanan believed that Gorchakov's words were sincere despite the evidence he had seen of

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[195] Letter from the Earl of Clarendon to Mr Rumbold, 17 April 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 17.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Letter from A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 1 November 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 42.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Extract from the Moscow Gazette of November 1/13, 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 48.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 1 December 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 55.

preparations for an invasion of Khiva, and suggests that the preparations were only a contingency in case such an expedition would be necessary.[203] However, on 4 January 1870, Buchanan would return with another report that military preparations had indeed been made and that an expedition led by General Heymann would be crossing the Caspian in February.[204] By March, however, there had still been no attack, though Buchanan was reporting a sense of unease in Russia about the Khan's intentions.[205] By the end of that month, Buchanan had become optimistic that relations between Russia and Khiva had become more promising.[206]

Though it would seem that the crisis was averted for now, this would prove to not be the case. Though with the benefit of hindsight it seems clear that Gorchakov was being dishonest, at the time it would not have been so clear, especially with the limited speed of communications at the time. In April, he reported that General Kaufmann, the Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, the new province created by Russia out of the regions of Central Asia they had conquered, had been told that the Khan was not responding to their communications, and that if it should be necessary to take measures against him, there should be no question of an annexation of Khiva.[207] In May it was reported that Kaufmann was operating under the belief that Khiva and Bukhara were in negotiations to form an alliance against Russia, and that an attack on Fort Alexander by the Kirghize, known in the modern day as Kazakhs, who at the time were nomadic tribes in Russian controlled territory in the Kirghize steppes, had been instigated by the Khan of Khiva.[208] In June, it was reported that the Russians were now operating under the assumption that the unrest in Kirghize was not, in fact, being instigated by the Khan.[209] As is apparent from these unclear and conflicting reports, the Indian Government could not be sure whether the Russians had good cause to invade Khiva or not, though it is consistently reported that they were prepared to invade Khiva if they thought it necessary. This uncertainty could explain the government's caution in this matter, as they could not act and potentially escalate the conflict with Russia if they did not know for certain whether a

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[203] Ibid.
[204] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 29 December 1869, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 59.
[205] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 8 March 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 80.
[206] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 22 March 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 83.
[207] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 6 April 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 85.
[208] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 4 May 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 87.
[209] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 1 June 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 89.

threat existed. By this time, however, it was clear that the plan of declaring Khiva as a neutral zone would most likely be impossible. Nonetheless, Buchanan was optimistic that the summer would pass without any expedition against Khiva taking place.[210] On the part of Khiva, it was reported that the Khivan Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that Russia was under the impression that its power gave it the right to bully other nations, and that Khiva would be ready to defend itself if necessary.[211]

In May of 1871, both Buchanan and the Viceroy of India himself agreed that a Russian expedition against Khiva was likely to soon take place, but this invasion had still not materialised, despite having been expected for years.[212] In June of 1871, Buchanan reported that an expedition against Khiva had been considered, but that it had been decided that only partial operations to defend the Russian frontier would be necessary.[213] In September, he reported that the reason a full invasion had not yet taken place was due to the intervention of an agent of the Minister of Finance, who felt that the invasion would be too expensive.[214] This corroborates earlier reports of a sentiment in Russia that expanding the empire in Central Asia was too expensive, and could explain the earlier conflicting reports surrounding the possibility of an invasion. In January of 1872, the Council of India had become concerned enough to warn Russia that, if Russia were to occupy Khiva, it might compel the Indian Government to occupy Herat.[215] However, the Government of India were still hesitant about their warnings, only stating that they might occupy Herat, making no commitments to do so. It was also reported by an agent at Asterabad, Persia that a force of 300 Russian cavalry had engaged in a 'surveying expedition' in Khiva, but had immediately retreated after encountering Khivan forces.[216] In March, Loftus spoke to Stremooukoff, the head of the Russian Asiatic Department, who explained that General Kaufmann had made three appeals to the Khan of Khiva, all of which had been responded to with 'a tone of insolence and defiance', and similarly ignored the

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[210] Ibid.
[211] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl of Clarendon, 15 June 1870, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 90.
[212] Letter from the Viceroy of India to the Duke of Argyll, 25 May 1871/Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to Earl Granville, 24 May 1871, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 108.
[213] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl Granville, 12 June 1871, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 110.
[214] Letter from Sir A. Buchanan to the Earl Granville, 18 September 1871, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 115.
[215] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Duke of Argyll, 5 January 1872, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 133.
[216] Letter from the Asterabad Agent to Mr Alison, 3 January 1872, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 135.

requests of the Emir of Bukhara.[217] Stremooukoff further explained that the Khan was using the local nomadic tribes to raid and plunder Russian subjects, and taken Russian prisoners.[218] He argued that the reason that Russia had not engaged in any expeditions against Khiva because Khiva was so weak that it would collapse immediately if it were attacked.[219] Nonetheless, Loftus was convinced by this conversation that an expedition against Khiva was indeed planned.[220] Once again, the Russians claimed that they had no desire to remain in Khiva permanently, saying that the Tsar had given direct orders to that effect.[221] But of course, this was another lie, and the Khan of Khiva also signed a treaty making himself the vassal of the Tsar.

Russia again justified itself by claiming that it had no choice but to annex Khiva by claiming that the Khan was constantly encroaching on their territory and fomenting rebellion among their subjects. Sergeev argues that the annexation of Khiva created a war scare in India that ensured that it would be impossible to bring the Great Game to an end for at least another thirty years.[222] From 1875-1876 the Russian general Nikolai Lomakin (sometimes referred to as Lamakin or Llamakin in British documents) advanced past Krasnovodsk to gain the surrender of the Akhal Turkoman tribes, a group of people living in territory that was formally Persian, but was independently governed by the Turkomans, and existed on the trade route between Persia and Khiva.[223] In 1874, shortly after the conquest of Khiva, a warning had been circulated to the chiefs of these tribes that there must be no rebellion, the roads to Khiva must be kept clear and the Russian trading caravans should not be harmed, but expressed a desire for friendship between Russia and the Turkoman tribes.[224] The military officer and diplomat William Taylour Thomson considered this to represent a change in Russian attitudes from an aggressive to a conciliatory stance.[225] Interestingly, Loftus reported to the Earl of Derby in September 1874 that public opinion in Russia was turning against the expansion in Central

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[217] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to Earl Granville, 19 March 1872, Correspondence Respecting Central Asia, 1869-73, The National Archives, FO 539/9, p. 135.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 351.
[222] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 142.
[223] Memorandum from O.D.B to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, IOR/C/142, p. 182.
[224]Translation of Circular Letter addressed by General Llamakin to the Turkoman Chiefs, 28 May 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 11-12.
[225] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 19 June 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 12.

Asia, due to the large expenditure being funnelled into these territories, money which it was believed could be better spent at home.[226] However, Loftus also noted that a large standing army could not remain unemployed for long periods of time, and that as only a small portion of that army had been used in Khiva, the rest of the army would need to be used if it was not to be disbanded.[227]

By now, the borders of the Russian Empire extended almost all the way to India's doorstep, with only Afghanistan remaining to separate the two. And yet, the Government of India still did not act. Some within the government even seemed to support Russia's dominion over at least some of the Central Asians, particularly the Turkoman tribes. In an 1875 letter from Charles Aitchison, Foreign Secretary for the Government of India to Thomas Thornton, Secretary to the Punjab Government who served as Aitchison's replacement whenever he was absent due to returning to Britain, Aitchison described how, soon after the conquest of Khiva, the Russians inflicted great loss upon, one of these tribes, the Khivan branch of the Yomuds, but doubted that they would attack the other tribes, 'provided the Turkomans in the neighbourhood abstain from molesting Russian subjects and committing depredations on Russian commerce'.[228] He further opines that 'it is therefore highly desirable that all proper influences should be brought to bear on them with a view to induce them to abandon the lawless and predatory habits which many among them still retain'.[229] He did suggest that some of the tribes had begun to abandon these practices, but makes it clear in his letter that he believes the Russians have just cause to oppress them.[230]

Sergeev wrote that the conquest of Khiva was the last straw that ensured that British and Russian relations degraded to the point that the Great Game could not be ended during this time period, but much of the correspondence from officials in the British and Indian Governments during and after the conquest of Khiva remains quite conciliatory towards Russia.[231] Sir Bartle Frere, a member of the Council of India, wrote to Sir John Kaye, at the time the Secretary in the Political and Secret Department of the Office of the Secretary of State for India, saying that although he was glad to see the policy of 'masterly inactivity' begin to be

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[226] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 1 September 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 14.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Letter from Mr Aitchison to Mr Thornton, 14 June 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 43.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid, pp. 43-44.
[231] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 142.

abandoned, he did not see Russia's planned advance on Merv, a Central Asian city close to the border of the important 'buffer' of Afghanistan, as cause for military action.[232] He writes that it was important for the Government of India's security that Merv remained out of Russian hands, but as Russia was a 'civilised' nation and the Central Asian Khanates were 'uncivilised', it was natural that Russia would expand to overcome them, and doubted that there would be public support in Britain for protecting Central Asia.[233] The former Viceroy Lord Lawrence agreed with the sentiment that the possible Russian occupation of Merv should not be viewed as cause for war and continued to defend the 'masterly inactivity' policy which he had introduced during his time in office, saying that he was opposed to any policy which would cause offence to Russia, though simultaneously admitting that Russia's rapid advance towards India was cause for concern.[234] Henry Rawlinson, another member of the Council of India who opposed the policy of 'masterly inactivity', also agreed that a Russian occupation of Merv should not be seen as justification for war, but argued that it would be necessary for the Government of India to ally with Afghanistan and place a British garrison in Herat if that were to happen, as Russia must not be allowed to gain access to Herat.[235]

In 1874, Lord Augustus Loftus, the Ambassador to Russia, wrote a confidential letter to the Earl of Derby reporting on the situation in Russia's Asian territories. Loftus reported that although relations between Russia and Khiva were now good, the Khan of Kokand was acting in a tyrannical manner and displeasing the Russians, believing that he could get away with doing so because they would support him at any cost due to their desire to maintain their influence over Central Asia.[236] However according to Loftus the Russians were actually willing to have the Khan deposed if this behaviour continued.[237] Meanwhile, there were said to be problems in Kashgar, one of the main population centres of Yakub Beg's newly formed Emirate of Yettishar, making trade with the rest of Central Asia more difficult.[238] By 1875 a letter from the Viceroy to Lord Salisbury, at the time the Secretary of State for India, reads as distinctly tired of Russia's assurances. It points out that in 1869 Gorchakov assured Lord Clarendon that Russia

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[232] Letter from B. Frere to J. Kaye, 12 June 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 1.
[233] Ibid, pp. 1-2.
[234] Memorandum on the Central Asian Question from Lord Lawrence, 4 November 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 8.
[235] Memorandum on the Central Asian Question from H. Rawlinson, 4 November 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 11.
[236] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 22 June 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 9-10.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.

had no intention of proceeding any further south, while in 1873 Count Schouvaloff assured the Ambassador at St Petersburg that Russia had no intention of annexing Khiva, both of which were later proved false.[239] As such the Viceroy felt that it would be impossible to trust Russia's assurances regarding Afghanistan.[240]

Even Viceroy Lytton, who was hailed as a return to the old 'forward' policies when he came to office in the late 1870's was quite passive by the standards of the East India Company. Though he advocated for more interference in the affairs of the states surrounding India, he was still not willing to use military force. For example, when the Russo-Turkish war broke out in 1877, neither the Government of India nor the British Government interceded, an action which had the other heads of state in the region wondering if this meant that the Government of India was too weak to go to war with Russia.[241] Considering that in 1856, the Crimean War had been fought to defend Turkey from Russia, this represents a significant change in policy. Likewise, when Merv was threatened by Russian invasion, Lytton preferred to have Persia become its defenders, rather than have the Government of India intercede itself.[242] This was despite the fact that, by the admission of the Shah of Persia himself, Persia did not have the power to mount a successful defence of either Merv or Persia against Russia.[243] Merv was in modern day Turkmenistan, near the border of both Persia and Afghanistan, and its annexation by Russia would therefore bring their borders dangerously close to Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it was not until Afghanistan itself was threatened that he became willing to go to war.

Merv had been a potential target for Russian invasion for years. In a series of letters in 1874, the British military officer and diplomat, William Taylour Thomson wrote of a Russian subject who had been imprisoned there.[244] In September of that year it was reported by Loftus that while most of the Turkoman tribes had submitted to Russia, the Teke Turkomans of Merv were still unwilling to do so, although he further elaborated that Russia could conquer them at any time and 'incorporate the whole country lying between Khiva, the Oxus, and Persia, including

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[239] Letter from the Governor-General of India in Council to the Maquis of Salisbury, 23 August 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 50.
[240] Ibid.
[241] Memorandum from O.T.B to the Council of India on Russia in Central Asia, 17 July 1879, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, IOR/C/142, p. 192.
[242] Ibid.
[243] Letter from the Shah to the Sepeh Salar, 5 May 1879, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1870 – 1879, IOR/C/142, p. 193.
[244] Letters from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 20 May 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 11.

Merv, the central point of importance'.[245] Loftus further argued that while it could be argued that the Teke Turkomans were a 'nomad barbarous people' and that Russia's subjugation of them could be seen as 'a gain to the cause of civilisation and order', he feared that allowing Russia to gain access to this territory could lead to future complications, granting them 80000 irregular cavalry, control over all the railroads around the Caspian Sea, which would 'seriously menace the independence of Persia and Afghanistan, and thereby become a standing danger to our Indian Empire'.[246] This further confirms Afghanistan and Persia as the Indian Government's most important priorities in their defence of India, and positions Merv as an important step for Russia towards threatening these territories. In a letter from the Shah of Persia to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in August 1874, he warns of Russia's expansion across Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, warning that Merv would be next and suggesting that Persia be allowed to take control of Merv instead, forming a barrier between Russia and Afghanistan.[247] However, this was at least partially an attempt by Persia to convince the Indian Government to assist them against Turkey, so their sincerity is questionable.[248] At the time, relations between Persia and Turkey had degraded to the point that Persia had 50 000 troops stationed on its border with Turkey, and Loftus notes that it would be necessary to put an end to this dispute in order for Persia to be able to successfully defend Merv.[249]

In January of 1875 however, a letter from the Earl of Derby indicated that the Russian Tsar and Prince Gorchakov had both given assurances that Russia had no intention of occupying Merv.[250] In March, he further reported a conversation with the Russian Ambassador to Britain, Count Schouvaloff, in which both agreed that there had been a great deal of unnecessary suspicion between the two nations of late, and that there should not be any further advances of troops from either side. Derby further noted that the only situation in which British troops might be advanced was if Russian troops were to occupy Merv but had assured the ambassador that the British would not move if the Russians did not.[251] In February 1875 a

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[245] Letter from Lord A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 28 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 13.
[246] Ibid, pp. 13-14.
[247] Autograph note addressed by the Shah to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Communicated to Mr Taylour Thomson, 12 August 1874, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 17-18.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Letter from the Earl of Derby to Mr Taylor Thomson, 8 January 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 23.
[251] Letter from the Earl of Derby to Lord A. Loftus, 19 March 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 26.

letter from Captain George Campbell Napier, an intelligence officer for the Government of India on special assignment in Persia, clarified more information on a Russian prisoner in Merv. According to Napier, the prisoner was from a caravan that had been plundered, and that while an offer of ransom had been presented by Merv, it was rejected by Russia.[252] However, Napier did not believe Russia intended to attack Merv over the hostage, as they had had plenty of opportunities to do so and had developed a more conciliatory attitude on their frontier of late.[253]

In January of 1876 Taylour Thomson reported that the Shah of Persia, irritated at a series of raids from the Teke Turkomans, had seriously considered launching an attack on Merv with 20,000 men. Taylour Thomson feared that, should this come to pass, it would cause Russia to place pressure on Persia to prevent such an action, and accelerate the advance of Russia in Central Asia.[254] The next day, Taylour Thomson transmitted three documents to the Earl of Derby, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, an extract from the Tehran Gazette, claiming that Persian troops had defeated a large force of Teke Turkomans from Merv at Kelat by, and two letters from the Agent at Meshed, Persia, Meerza Abbas Khan, claiming that these statements were greatly exaggerated.[255] The Tehran Gazette reported that the Turkomans had been defeated due to the efforts of Abdul Hussein Sultan, commander of the garrison at Derbend, and Beh-bood Khan, the Governor of Kelat, and that the chief of the Turkomans, Khooja Kah, had fallen in battle, along with 500 others.[256] Meerza Abbas Khan, the Government of India's Agent in Meshed, Persia, however, reported that only two of the Turkomans had been killed, with only eight or nine wounded. He also made sure to note that there was no news of Russia advancing on Merv, Khiva, Bukhara or the Akhal Turkomans, indicating that this remained a matter of concern despite Napier's assertion that Russia would not attack.[257]

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[252] Extract from a Letter from Captain Napier to Mr Aitchison, 22 February 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 43.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 25 January 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 71.
[255] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 27 January 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 71.
[256] Extract from the Tehran Gazette, 'Iran' of 16 January 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 71-72.
[257] Letter from Meerza Abbas Khan to Mr Taylour Thomson, 20 December 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 72.

The diary of Kazi Syud Ahmed, an Indian soldier who had recently visited the Afghan colony of Kara Tappa on the Caspian Sea, and learned what the people there knew of Russian movements in the region, an extract of which was also transmitted to the Viceroy, indicated that General Lomakin, the commander of most of Russia's Central Asian campaigns, had sent a Turkoman tribesman respected in the region, Eel Geldi Khan to Merv, to give gifts to the chiefs of the Turkomans and demand their allegiance to Russia, and to cease all hostilities so that Lomakin himself could make an official visit to them, but if they refused, he was instructed to tell them to prepare for war.[258] This indicated to the Viceroy that the rumours of a planned Russian invasion of Merv were legitimate. The chiefs immediately rejected the offer, but it was reported in the diary that instead of preparing for war, Lomakin had doubled the number of gifts and sent the messenger to try again.[259] If Russia did declare war and successfully conquer Merv, they would reach the border of Afghanistan and their ability to threaten India would be increased. In November of 1876 Lord Lytton wrote to the Marquis of Salisbury indicating that he had received reports that General Kaufmann was amassing troops for an attack on Merv.[260] However, Gorchakov, in a meeting with Loftus, denied that any expedition against Merv was planned, and claimed that the troops were instead to be used defensively to prevent the Teke Turkomans from raiding other tribes.[261] The Government of India were greatly concerned about the possibility of a Russian attack on Merv, as shown by a further letter from Loftus which stated that 'it was of essential importance that no question of difficulty should arise between the two Governments (India and Russia) in regard to Central Asia'.[262] Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gorchakov was also reported to have said that his government desired anxiously that there be no change in the status quo, but he had made similar statements before, and the Russian advance had not ceased.[263]

In January 1877, G.T. Rickets, a diplomat and former officer in the Indian army, in a letter to the Earl of Derby, suggested that the Turkoman tribes to the East and West of Merv should be

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[258] Extract from Diary of Kazi Syud Ahmed at Kara Tappa, an Afghan Colony on the Caspian, 20 October 1875, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 73.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Letter from Lord Lytton to the Maquis of Salisbury, 20 November 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 102.
[261] Letter from A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 15 November 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 102-103.
[262] Letter from A. Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 17 November 1876, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 103.
[263] Ibid, p. 103.

influenced to fall under the control of Persia and Kabul, and that by doing so their borders could be advanced so as to cut off Russia's advance to the East, preventing the feared invasion.[264] In February, the Meshed Agent reported to Taylour Thomson that a group of Turkomans from Merv were in Persia, offering their services to Persia in exchange for money, which provided an opportunity for the process of uniting the two groups to begin.[265] In March of that year, Ricketts reported an expedition of Russian soldiers from Krasnovodsk to subdue the Teke Turkomans, and opined that this could be prevented by the Persians, but doubted that they would be willing to do so.[266] In another letter, Taylour Thomson opined that 'There can be no doubt that the occupation of the whole line of country from the shores of the Caspian by Kizil Arvad and the Attrek on to Merv and the Oxus, including Serekhs, and eventually the districts south of Merv on the banks of the Moorghab, has for a length of time been the fixed resolution of Russia in her Central Asian policy.'[267] The Attrek, Oxus and Moorghab were all rivers which provided natural barriers which Russia could use to secure their position in the region, while Kizil Arvad and Serekhs were settlements along that potential new border of Russian territory. Simultaneously, the Meshed Agent continued to report to Taylour Thomson on the state of negotiations between Merv and Persia, indicating that the Merv Turkomans had agreed to serve Persia, and that the idea of doing so was very popular among them, as they hoped to be given Serrekhs as a residence if they did so.[268] If this were successful, it would compel Persia to defend Merv, which would now be its territory, in the event of a Russian invasion, strengthening India's 'buffers' without requiring the Government of India to intervene directly.[269]

In June, Louis Mallet, the Under-Secretary of State for India, reported to Lord Tenterden, Permanent Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office, that Lomakin had amassed forces at Kizzil Arvad with the stated intention to punish the Teke Turkomans, and that this expedition could

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[264] Letter from Mr Rickets to the Earl of Derby, 5 January 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 118.
[265] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 1 February 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 126-127.
[266] Letter from Mr Ricketts to the Earl of Derby, 5 February 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 124.
[267] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 22 March 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 129.
[268] Letter from the Meshed Agent to Mr Taylour Thomson, 23 March 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 132.
[269] Letter from Mr Rickets to the Earl of Derby, 5 January 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 118.

lead to the occupation of Merv.[270] Mallet, drawing attention to Gorchakov's earlier declaration of Russia's intention not to occupy Merv or expand its influence beyond its then-current holdings in Central Asia, mentioned that Lord Salisbury's wished to warn the Russian government that the taking of Merv would be seen by the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions as breaking this promise.[271] Indeed in a later letter, the Earl of Derby instructed Loftus to point out this discrepancy to Gorchakov, and impress upon him that allowing the two empires to have outposts to close to one another would not be desirable to either.[272] It should be noted that throughout these events, the Indian Government continued to rely entirely on either diplomacy with Russia, or on the intervention of other countries such as Persia, rather than sending any aid to Merv themselves. Loftus in particular displays a rather naïve seeming trust in the honesty of Gorchakov, even as the steady advance of Russian soldiers proved his words incorrect if not untrustworthy. Meanwhile, Taylour Thomson declared that Russia intended to take all of Central Asia, and that this had been their policy for some time.[273]

Though opinions on the intentions of Russia within the Government of India clearly differed, none of the officials in these letters argue that India should do anything to assist Merv itself, only that they influence other Asian nations to do so. While the Government of India are shown to possess agents in other nations, such as Meerza Abbas Khan in Persia, these agents are only shown to be reporting on the goings on there, not to be trying to influence their host governments as the agents during the time of the East India Company would have. Based on these examples, it would seem that the change to 'forward' policy from the beginning of Lytton's appointment as Viceroy in 1877 presented by Sergeev and Hopkirk is somewhat overstated. While the example of Kashgar shows that the Government of India did become more willing to utilise these kinds of tactics over time, the examples of Khiva and Merv, which were happening at roughly the same time, demonstrate that this was not a consistent policy. After an attempt to declare Khiva as the neutral buffer zone that neither power would cross, which they proceeded not to enforce, they decided upon Afghanistan as their true buffer zone, one which they were willing to defend with force if necessary. This was the true return to

[270] Letter from Sir L. Mullet to Lord Tenterden, 6 June 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, pp. 134-135.
[271] Ibid, p. 135.
[272] Letter from the Earl of Derby to A. Loftus, 13 June 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 137.
[273] Letter from Mr Taylour Thomson to the Earl of Derby, 22 March 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 129.

'forward' policy in India towards Russia, and it was done in defence of Afghanistan, not Central Asia.

The Government of India were successful in turning Afghanistan into the strong buffer state that they needed in 1878. This turned the conflict with Russia into an uneasy stalemate that lasted until the First World War, which turned Britain and Russia into allies and ensured that Russia would no longer be a threat to India. However, the Government of India had lost a lot of ground to the Russians in Central Asia for no real gain in return. The reasoning behind the Government of India's policy of 'masterly inactivity had been to ensure that Russia could not incite a second mutiny of the Indian army or launch an attack from Persia or Afghanistan.[274] Those following this policy such as Lord Granville and Lord Northbrook, argued that the East India Company's mistake had been to expand too much, necessitating the defence of each of those new expansions, and that Russia was now making that same mistake, leaving them vulnerable.[275] Northbrook, Lawrence's successor as Viceroy, also believed that the further into Asia the Russians conquered, the less likely it would be that the likes of the Indians and Afghans would see them positively, and therefore the less likely it would be that there would be another mutiny.[276] That being said, Russia's devastating defeat in the Crimean War had left the Russian Government wary of large-scale war as well; it was one thing to invade smaller, weaker states like Khiva and Bukhara, but another entirely to fight the large-scale war with Britain that would inevitably have ensued if they attacked India. After all, when the Government of India did make Afghanistan a client state, it did not result in a war with Russia.

After being made to back down in the Panjdeh Incident in 1885, Russia did not attempt to invade Afghanistan again. That being the case, the Government of India possibly could have succeeded in with annexing Khiva or Bukhara if they had reached it before Russia did. Lytton certainly thought so when he became the new Viceroy, quoting from a speech from Palmerston years before, which spoke of Russia's tendency to push as far as they could without getting into conflict with the other major powers, but back off when faced with serious resistance.[277] It should be no surprise that, shortly after Lytton's appointment, the Government of India were at war with Afghanistan. Bartle Frere, a member of the Council of India, expressed similar sentiments in a letter to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, stating that 'we know it to be so, that the Russians are our friends only so long as we allow

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[274] Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia*, p. 282
[275] Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 121.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars 1839-1919,* p. 85.

them to pursue their schemes of conquest unchallenged and no longer, that they are essentially a conquering and aggressive nation, and will conquer in our direction, unless they are convinced we will actively oppose them'.[278] However, that is not to say that it would have been worth doing so. The Government of India's objective was not to conquer Central Asia but to defend India. For that purpose, Afghanistan was more than sufficient. While in 1873, it was by no means certain that the Government of India would be able to secure Afghanistan as it did, justifying the worry of the likes of Rawlinson, by 1880 they had everything they needed to keep Russia out of India on a long-term basis.

Overall, it is clear that the attitudes of the East India Company and the Government of India towards Central Asia were very different. While the Company believed it important that Russia was not allowed to make any advancement in the region, to the point of intervening to prevent potential wars between Russia and Khiva or Bukhara, the Government of India were a much more cautious, diplomatic, often passive organisation, which allowed Russia to conquer Central Asia all the way up to the borders of Afghanistan, preferring to focus instead on its own internal security. Both of these approaches had their advantages and disadvantages. While the East India Company were able to secure stronger borders for India as well as leaving several additional buffer states blocking Russia's path from Russia to India, which served it well in their clashes with Russia in the future, they also damaged their reputation by appearing warlike and interventionist, and alienated some of their native troops, eventually leading to their downfall in the Mutiny of 1857. Sergeev's argument that the East India Company did not participate in the Great Game because it did not begin until Ignatiev's diplomatic missions to Khiva and Bukhara in 1858 can be contradicted by several accounts of similar Company and Russian missions to those same countries in the 1830s and 40s.[279] These include the letter from Amir Nasrullah Khan to Queen Victoria in which he stated that he had already been meeting with Russian agents prior to 1841.[280] Alexander Burnes received intelligence from Bukhara that a Russian agent had come to the city to ask that Stoddart be turned over to him during his captivity.[281] These missions must be considered part of the Great Game because, as

[278] Letter from B.E. Frere to Lord Salisbury, 3 March 1876, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1759-1876, IOR/C/139, p. 81.
[279] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, pp. 79-80.
[280] Translation of a Letter from the King of Bukhara to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, translated by Alexander Burnes 16 June 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 26.
[281] Translation of a letter from Nasir Khan Allah to the envoy at Kabul, translated by Alexander Burnes, 24 September 1839, Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol 63, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/144, p. 310.

Stoddart himself states while on the mission that would claim his life, the express purpose of that mission was to keep Russia in check by ensuring it did not take Bukhara.[282]

By contrast, the Government of India's passive approach allowed their rival, Russia, to make significant territorial gains in the period between 1864 and 1873, while also eliminating most of the buffer states which separated them from India. The Government of India refused to engage in anything more than minor skirmishes until pushed to their limit in the Second Afghan War. However, when they did act, they were able to essentially stabilise the Great Game, leaving it in a stalemate, which was all that they needed as their objective was to defend India, not all of Asia. This is due to the Government of India's philosophy of 'masterly inactivity,' in which they would allow Russia to exhaust its resources conquering the surrounding territories, while they built up their own defences and waited for Russia to come to them. This had the disadvantage of ceding much territory to Russia, but the advantage of not needing to defend and administer that extra territory. Adolphus Moore, Assistant Secretary of the Political Department, reported the Viceroy Lord Lawrence, who first implemented this strategy, as having said at a meeting in 1867 that if a conflict between Britain and Russia in Central Asia was inevitable, it would be better to let Russia make the long and arduous marches that lay between the Oxus and Indus rivers which separated Russian territory from Indian territory, enabling the Government of India to meet the advance at a place of its choosing.[283] Meyer and Brysac argued that Lawrence's advice was ignored by his successors.[284] Lord Mayo, Lawrence's immediate successor as Viceroy, did approve a diplomatic expedition to Yettishar, in opposition to the policies of Lawrence which did not allow British agents to leave the borders of India.[285] Hopkirk also argues that this event was the return of 'forward' policies in India.[286]

After Mayo's death in 1872, the next Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, continued his policy by appointing Robert Shaw as a British political agent in Yettishar.[287] However, this was only a

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[282] Letter from C. Stoddart to Lord Palmerston, 16 March 1841, Enclosures to Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol 33, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/5/395, p. 13.
[283] Memorandum from A.W. Moore of the Political and Secret Department on the Afghan difficulty, 31 August 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 248.
[284] Meyer and Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India,* p. 157.
[285] Memorandum by R.B. Shaw on the present condition of affairs in Eastern Turkestan, 10 April 1876, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Baluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 245.
[286] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia,* p. 323-324.
[287] Confidential letter from the Governor-General in Council, 2 June 1874, Abstracts of letters from India 1874, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/CA14, p. 137.

temporary measure until a treaty between the Government of India and Yettishar could be signed, and Shaw was soon recalled from his position.[288] While this was a momentary return to the 'forward' policies that had been common under the East India Company, it appears to have been an isolated incident, as the Government of India did not similarly intervene in Bukhara or Khiva, which were being annexed by Russia at the same time. Lord Lytton, the Viceroy after Northbrook, is often presented as being the true supporter of 'forward policies' among the Viceroys, due to his participation in the Second Afghan War. But even his Government preferred to leave the defence of Merv to Persia rather than become directly involved.[289] It would be more accurate to say that while the Government of India became slightly more willing to utilise 'forward' policies after Lawrence was replaced as Viceroy, especially under Lytton, they were still reluctant to do so in most circumstances, the Second Afghan War being an exception due to Afghanistan's importance as a 'buffer'.

The Government of India's more cautious approach was a direct response to the policies of the East India Company, which the officials of the Government of India considered to be a mistake, as the Company had overextended itself, leading to its downfall. In his Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question, which was presented before the Council of India in 1874, Owen Tudor Burne, Secretary to the Viceroy Lord Mayo, lamented that the 'warlike expeditions' of the East India Company had created 'distrust and hatred' of the British in Central Asia, making the Government of India's position in the region more difficult.[290] Adolphus Moore reported that at a meeting of the Viceroy's Council in 1867, all members present, including the Viceroy Lord Lawrence, agreed that sending British agents into the different states of Central Asia, as the East India Company had done, would be a mistake.[291] In this way, despite the seeming foolishness of a policy of doing absolutely nothing while the Government of India's biggest rival expanded its Empire, the Government of India were actually pursuing a legitimate strategy which, through their victory in Afghanistan, can be said to have worked. However, their victory in the Second Afghan War was by no means assured, and paradoxically, while

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[288] Report on Mr R. B. Shaw's proceedings in Kashgar in 1874-1875 prior to his return to India, compiled by T.C. Plowden, Officiating Under-Secretary to the Government of India Foreign Department, 1878, Précis of correspondence, &c., relating to affairs in Central Asia, Baluchistan, Persia, &c. 1875-77. With appendices, The British Library, IOR/L/PS/20/253, p. 136.

[289] Letter from Mr Rickets to the Earl of Derby, 5 January 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 118.

[290] Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question from Owen Tudor Burne, 30 April 1874, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 17 Jan 1874 - 11 Jan 1875, The British Library, IOR/C/137, p. 24.

[291] Memorandum from A.W. Moore of the Political and Secret Department on the Afghan difficulty, 31 August 1878, Memoranda and Papers laid before the Council of India, 1 Oct 1877 - 29 Oct 1878, The British Library, IOR/C/141, p. 248.

seeming averse to risk on the surface, the Government of India actually took the biggest risk of all by gambling everything on their ability to defend Afghanistan. Though the East India Company's policies damaged the reputation of the British in Central Asia, they did strengthen the borders of India through the occupation of the Sind and the Punjab. Furthermore, Abbott and Shakespear did succeed in preventing Russia from invading Khiva in 1840 by negotiating the release of the Russian slaves who were Russia's pretext for invading. While the Government of India inherited the Company's reputation for imperialism, giving Russia an excellent excuse for its own imperialism, they also inherited the series of buffer states protecting India, meaning that it took two and a half decades for Russia to actually reach the borders of Afghanistan. Though the Government of India were unable to prevent Russian expansion into Central Asia during their time in power, that was only because they were pursuing a less ambitious, and perhaps more sensible, goal, not the spread of British influence or even the reduction of Russian influence in Central Asia, but rather the defence of India at all costs.

Conclusion:

Phillip Stern wrote that 'from its inception in 1600, the East India Company, as a corporation, was by its very organisation a government over its own employees and corporators'.[1] He also writes that 'as a corporation, a joint-stock company, and proprietor of English government and colonies in Asia, the English East India Company thus needs to be approached as a form of political community and polity.'[2] The East India Company, despite being officially subordinate to the British Government, could not consistently rely upon the British Government to send them orders due to the difficulty of corresponding over the vast distance between India and Britain, with months passing between letters being sent from India and arriving at their destination in London.[3] Therefore, the Governor-General, the highest ranking official actually stationed in India, made most of the decisions regarding the day to day management of India. Furthermore, it was the East India Company's Court of Directors, who were not selected by the British Government, not the Board of Control which represented the British Government, who had the authority to select and replace a Governor-General.[4] As a result, the dissolution of the East India Company and its replacement by the direct rule of the British Government over India represents a significant change in British policy, and this includes India's policy towards the Great Game. After the new Government of India officially took office in 1858, the position of Governor-General was replaced by that of Viceroy, overseen by the India Office, all of whom were selected by the British Government. Furthermore, the construction of a telegram line between Britain and India in 1870 made communication between the two much faster from that point on.[5] This meant that the British Government had far greater direct control over the policies of India. And yet, in the historiography of the Great Game, as has been referenced at the beginning of each chapter of this thesis, there is very little mention of this transition. Most analyses of the Great Game simply cover the Mutiny and move on without addressing the change in Government to any real degree.[6] Occasionally, there is a description of some change such as the reorganisation of the army, but no in depth analysis.[7] At most, there is the

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[1] P. Stern, The Company-State, *Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2012) p. 3.
[2] Ibid, p. 10.
[3] Letter from Mr Ellis to Viscount Palmerston, 25 February 1836, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 10.
[4] S. David, *Victoria's Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 78.
[5] G.C. Mendis, *Ceylon Under the British* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1952), p. 96.
[6] R. Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), p. 97.
[7] P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray Press, 1990), pp. 291-292.

argument that the Mutiny served as a similar disaster for the British as the Crimean War was for the Russians.[8] It is not that these historians are arguing that there was no change in policy between these two governments, rather they simply do not address it. As such there is an implication of continuity between the two that goes unaddressed and has not been challenged. The purpose of this thesis has been to challenge this omission and address the differences between the ways that the two Governments participated in the Game, as well as the effects of these differences on the Game itself.

The analysis of these differences was complicated by the fact that there is no consensus among historians as to what the Great Game was, when it began and ended, or whether it even existed at all. in It has been demonstrated that, at the very least, the East India Company believed themselves to be part of a political struggle with Russia in the region. In a letter from the political agent Alexander Burnes to Governor-General Auckland's advisor William Macnaghten in 1837, Burnes describes a meeting between himself and Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Afghanistan, in which the two discussed their belief that Russia was using Persia as a proxy to extend its empire to Afghanistan and Central Asia, as Britain had done with India.[9] The same is true of the Government of India after they fell under the direct control of the British Government, for example the diplomat and former Indian army officer, George Thorne Ricketts, wrote to the Earl of Derby about the importance of preventing the Russian advance through Central Asia.[10] Both governments acted according to this belief to prevent the spread of Russian influence of Asia, and both believed that it was necessary to defend India from Russian invasion, and therefore the Great Game must have existed. Therefore this thesis stands in opposition to the arguments of Malcolm Yapp, which have downplayed Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia and sought to cast doubt on the concept of the Great Game.[11] Furthermore, the fears at least of the Government of India were not only that Russia would invade India directly but also that their rapid approach might incite another mutiny.[12] It also stands in opposition to the arguments of Edward Ingram that the Great Game ended with

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[8] K. Meyer and S. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in India* (Berkely: Counterpoint, 1999), p. 151.
[9] Letter from Captain Burnes to Mr Macnaghten, 31 October 1837, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 66.
[10] Letter from Mr Rickets to the Earl of Derby, 5 January 1877, Confidential (3870.) Correspondence respecting Russian Proceedings in Central Asia, 1874-1877, The National Archives, FO 539/14, p. 118.
[11] M. Yapp, 'The Legend of the Great Game,' *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2000 Lectures and Memoirs* 111 (2001), pp. 189-190.
[12] H. Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 282.

Britain's defeat after the First Afghan War.[13] As demonstrated in the second chapter, the Second Afghan War ended with the establishment of Afghanistan as a secure ally capable of guarding India's border. Ingram's argument that the British lost the Great Game when they failed to secure Afghanistan as a client state is undermined by the fact that the Government of India did exactly that in 1880. Likewise, the fact that the First Afghan War was caused by the conflict between the East India Company and Russia over which would be allowed to maintain a diplomatic mission in Afghanistan demonstrates that Evgeny Sergeev's argument that the Game did not begin until after the Crimean War cannot be correct.[14] As both the First Afghan War and the Second were caused by conflicts between Britain's representatives in Asia over the allegiance of Afghanistan, the Great Game must have been ongoing during each war.

The Great Game has been presented by historians such as Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac as a sort of proto-Cold War.[15] Meyer and Brysac used this as a reference to espionage, but perhaps a more apt comparison between the two would be the way in which both involved two great powers using smaller states as proxies for their political conflict. Afghanistan, Persia, Khiva, Merv and Bukhara among others, and of course India itself, were all used by the British and Russians to further their own imperial goals. However, the East India Company and Government of India used different strategies in order to achieve these goals. The East India Company's policy of direct confrontation can be demonstrated by its invasion of Afghanistan, as shown in Chapter Two, its invasions of the Sind and the Punjab, as shown in Chapter One, and its multiple confrontations with Persia over the city of Herat. Although the Government of India did invade Afghanistan, this was the only example of them intervening militarily in service of the Great Game, having done so far less than the East India Company.

The Government of India's approach, characterised by a more defensive strategy focused on making alliances, can be demonstrated by their own approach to Afghanistan, in which, after their invasion, they used a proxy ruler to maintain indirect control over the country rather than attempting to rule it themselves, as discussed in Chapter Two. This can also be shown by their handling of Central Asia, allowing Russia to expand into the region as it was not necessary for their defence of India, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, and their improved relationship with Persia, as examined in Chapter Three. This demonstrates a difference in the policies of the two Governments regarding their willingness to utilise 'formal empire.' While the East India

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[13] E. Ingram, 'Great Britain's Great Game: An Introduction,' *The International History Review* Vol. 2, No. 2 (1980), p. 167.
[14] E. Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 3.
[15] Ibid, p. xviii.

Company annexed Sind and the Punjab and attempted to maintain direct control over Afghanistan during the First Afghan War, the Government of India made no such annexations, instead choosing Abdur Rahman Khan to serve as an almost entirely independent ruler for Afghanistan after the Second Afghan War. This indicates a greater affinity on the part of the Government of India for 'informal empire,' that is, the utilisation of trade deals and alliances to control regions through indirect influence. This can also be demonstrated though the Government of India's more diplomatic approach to Persia as discussed in Chapter Three, which resulted in their gaining much more influence over Persia than the East India Company had, bringing the southern half of Persia into their sphere of influence. Gallagher and Robinson argued that the early and mid-Victorian era was one of informal empire while the later Victorian era witnessed a greater attachment to formal empire.[16] However, in India at least, this does not seem to be the case, as the East India Company carried out several formal annexations of territory during the early stages of the Great Game, while after 1857, there were no such annexations.

On a surface level, it could seem that the Government of India failed in their participation in the Great Game. After all, under their rule, Russia made massive advances in Central Asia, bringing their borders almost all the way to the borders of India. The East India Company, despite their failure in the First Afghan War, still solidified their borders by acquiring the Sind and the Punjab, and successfully prevented Persia, which was under the influence of Russia, from gaining access to Herat. However, it must be considered that, under both the East India Company and the Government of India, the actual goals of the British in India during this time period were to defend India from Russian invasion, not necessarily to defend all of Asia. The East India Company believed that the best way to do this was to slow Russia's advance by interfering in their efforts to expand their territory as much as possible, as evidenced by their diplomatic missions to prevent Russian invasions of Khiva and Bukhara, as discussed in Chapter Four. Conversely, instead of attempting to defend all of Central Asia at once, the Government of India used Afghanistan as its hard line that could not be crossed, as they determined that any invasion of India would be required to pass through Afghanistan.[17] This being the case, Afghanistan became the most crucial point in Asia to defend. The East India Company also prioritised Afghanistan over all of its other 'buffer states', but still considered others such as

[16] J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' *The Economic History Review,* Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), pp. 11-12.
[17] Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia*, pp. 103-104.

Khiva and Bukhara to be necessary for India's defence, unlike the Government of India.[18] Under the East India Company, Afghanistan was left vulnerable due to their botched invasion during the First Afghan War, which weakened their relationship with Dost Mohammed Khan. Furthermore, though the Company successfully prevented Persia from seizing Herat, the most likely invasion route, on multiple occasions, Persia still remained as a threatening ally of Russia on the border of Afghanistan. Under the Government of India, not only was Afghanistan secured by the appointment of Abdur Rahman Khan the Amir, turning the country into a mostly independent and strong ally, but the Government were also able to take advantage of Russia's poor handling of its relationship with Persia by resuming diplomacy with them, making it a more neutral neighbour, and lessening the Persian threat towards Afghanistan. The only states that the Government of India used their resources to secure were Afghanistan, Persia and Yakub Beg's Emirate of Yettishar, which was in the East of Central Asia and had been originally controlled by China. These three were referred to together as an 'unassailable defence' by Rawlinson.[19] The collapse of Yettishar after the death of Yakub Beg in 1877 thus represents a failure on the part of the Government of India, though not a total one as Russia were also unable to secure a foothold there. This failure was mitigated by the securing of Afghanistan after the Second Afghan War.

The success of the Government of India in the defence of India can be demonstrated through the events that took place after the Second Afghan War. The Panjdeh Incident of 1885, in which an invasion of Afghanistan by Russia was settled diplomatically by the Amir without the need for British military support, demonstrated that Afghanistan was capable of resisting the Russian advance, and as a result Russia were unable to move their borders any closer to India. After this the rivalry between the two cooled significantly.[20] The agreement between Britain and Afghanistan was reinforced by another agreement between the two signed in 1893, known as the Durand Agreement, which established Afghanistan's borders with the parts of India which are now Pakistan, on India's vulnerable north-west frontier.[21] In 1895, Britain and Russia signed the Pamir Boundary Commission, which defined and formalised the boundary between Russia and Afghanistan.[22] Finally, in 1907, the two countries signed the Anglo-Russian

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[18] Letter from Mr McNeil to Lord Auckland, 25 June 1838, Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan: Correspondence, Part II, 1834-1839, The National Archives, FO 539/2, p. 83.
[19] Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East. A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia*, p. 272.
[20] C. Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris* (London: Hurst, 2015), pp. 103-104.
[21] I. Hussain, 'The Durand Agreement in the Light of Certain Recent International Conventions,' *Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America,* Vol. 18, No. 3 (1985), p. 255.
[22] G. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 216.

Convention of 1907, in which Russia officially recognised Afghanistan and southern Persia as being part of Britain's sphere of influence, while Britain recognised northern Persia and Central Asia as being part of Russia's sphere of influence.[23] The Foreign Minister at the time, Sir Edward Grey, declared in a speech in 1905 that 'if Russia accepts, cordially and whole-heartedly our intention to preserve the peaceable possession of our Asiatic possessions, then I am quite sure that in this country no government will make it our business to thwart or obstruct Russia's policy in Europe. On the contrary, it is urgently desirable that Russia's position and influence be re-established in the councils of Europe.'[24] This is referring to the fact that Britain and Russia were now cooperating to oppose Germany. In a further speech by Grey in 1907, he declared that the agreement signified a renunciation of 'forward' policies by both Britain and Russia, and that said policies were detrimental to both countries.[25] On the Russian side, officials such as Foreign Minister Alexander Izvolsky and Ivan Zinoviev, head of the Foreign Ministry's Asian Department, were concerned about Germany's plans to build a railway into Persia.[26] The two realised that it would be impossible to secure Northern Persia without British support, and that it would be preferable to make concessions to Britain on 'the Central Asian question', in order to secure their position.[27]

The Government of India was successful in the Great Game, as although they allowed Russia to take control of most of Central Asia, they neutralised the threats of Afghanistan and Persia, which had the greatest strategic significance in the Game and were the only locations from which a Russian invasion of India could realistically be launched. With the Second Afghan War they successfully secured their border against attack, as demonstrated by the Panjdeh Incident. After that event, Afghanistan would not be attacked by Russia for the rest of the Game. They were further able to have their control over Afghanistan and southern Persia officially recognised in a treaty by Russia. Sacrificing control over Central Asia so as to not expend resources that could be better used elsewhere was not a failure but rather just a different kind of strategy than that used by the East India Company, and one that left India in a much more secure position than it had been under the East India Company. The East India Company's attempt to occupy Afghanistan and control it directly led to a complete failure maintain that control, the deaths of almost their entire occupying force, and weakened their

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[23] Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*, pp. 520-522.
[24] W.L. Langer, 'Russia, the Straits Question, and the European Powers, 1904–8', *The English Historical Review, Vol 44, No. 173* (1929), p. 67.
[25] J. Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2002) p. 24.
[26] Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, p. 317.
[27] Ibid, pp. 317-318

relationship with their most crucial ‘buffer’ state. Their attempt to obtain the allegiance of Bukhara led only to the deaths of their own men, and although the Company were able to prevent the Russian invasion of Khiva and several Persian invasions of Herat, these successes did not put them in any stronger position but rather only maintained the status quo. They were also able to secure a stronger border for India itself by annexing Sind and the Punjab, however they were never able to eliminate the threats of Afghanistan and Persia, which remained throughout their time in office, with Herat suffering another Persian invasion in 1856, continuing into the events of the 1857 Mutiny, despite the Company having intervened militarily in two previous such invasions. By contrast, the Government of India accomplished their real objective, the creation of a powerful ‘buffer’ in Afghanistan and the securing of India’s borders.

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