**SPCRD GLOBAL
PUBLISHING**
Sustainable Solutions

RAMSS Review of Applied Management
and Social Sciences

Journal homepage: <http://ramss.spcrd.org>

ISSN (Print): 2708-2024

ISSN (Online): 2708-3640

Durand Line Agreement 1893: Myths and Reality

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
History: Accepted 09 Dec 2020 Available Online 31 Dec 2020	<i>This paper attempts to analyse the myths about the Durand Line Agreement between the British India and Afghanistan in 1893. Nineteenth century is considered as the century of imperialism. The two great powers i.e Great Britain and Russia were in competition to fulfill their imperialistic designs. Great Britain succeeded in taking full control of India and Russia annexed Khiva, Bokhara and Khokand currently Central Asian republics until 1870. Afghanistan was the only state left between the two giants. The British India tested its muscles in Afghanistan in 1839 and 1878 but failed to consolidate. The fear of Russian advancement during the Great Game compelled the British India to declare Afghanistan a buffer state and demarcate its boundaries. They started working on it immediately after the second Anglo-Afghan war in 1885. Resultantly the western boundaries of India were secured through the famous Durand Line Agreement in 1893 between Afghanistan and British India. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947 a lot of myths emerged related to this agreement. This paper focuses on those myths and its reality in order to clarify the misunderstanding related to this much debated agreement.</i>
Keywords: British India, Russia, Afghanistan, Durand Line, Great Game	
JEL Classification: N15, N25	
DOI: 10.47067/ramss.v3i3.71	

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1. Introduction

The advance of Russia towards the Indian empire in the 2nd half of the 19th century alarmed the British and they started thinking to stop this adventurous advance to some where beyond the Afghanistan territory. Thus they made a commission under the command of Sir Henry Mortimer Durand (Afghan Boundary Commission 1885) to demarcate the boundaries of Afghanistan (Khan, 2000). As a result the eastern and southern limits of Afghanistan were defined under the Durand Line Agreement of 1893 and the Northern and southern limits were defined under the Pamirs agreement of 1895. Afghanistan was considered as a buffer state between the two Giants (Great Britain and Russia) and thus the British took a sigh of relief till their departure from the Indian

Empire in 1947.

Afghanistan raised its voice against the Durand Line agreement when they came to know about the partition plan of India. In response the British Government paid no heed to it, declaring that Pakistan is a successor state of British India and all the agreements done during the British Raj will stand still. After the independence of Pakistan Afghanistan was the only country to oppose the membership of Pakistan in the United Nation Organization (Sufi, 2005). They raised and supported the movement of Pukhtunistan in the early 1950,s and 1970,s but Pakistan was fortunate enough that it did not gain mass popularity. In 1978 the dynastic rule in Afghanistan came to an end through a bloody sour revolution. It was a very bad experience which put Afghanistan into a quagmire. After forty years the people and government of Afghanistan are still struggling to put themselves out of this political turmoil. There are many reasons behind this situation but they often blame Pakistan for their mayhem and raising their voices against Durand Line Agreement, declaring it a cause of division of the Pakhtuns land.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on Conflict Theory advocated by different sociologists at different times. Lewis Coser (1913-2003) was a German sociologist; he argues that “*Conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aim of the opponents is to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals*”. Conflicts between groups of people and nations are common phenomenon. It is a part of relationships and is not necessarily a sign of instability. Due to power struggle resentment and hostility are constant elements of society. Differences among social classes give birth to interest groups fighting over scarce resources of society. This power struggle put society off-balance until dominant group gains control and stability through power. We observe similar differences in Pak-Afghan relations. In this paper an attempt has been made to know the realities of the myths created by different interest groups.

3. Research Method

Qualitative cum descriptive method was used to know about the reality regarding the claims of different interest groups. For this purpose, different issues, events and historical evidences were analysed to reach to a certain conclusion. Secondary sources including books, journals, magazines and newspapers were used. An interview from some eminent personalities and personal observation is also a part of this research paper.

4. Historical Background

The area of now a days Afghanistan was a part of Persian Empire before 1747. The emergence of Afghanistan as an independent state was only possible after the assassination of Nadir Shah Afshar the ruler of Persia who defeated the Mughals in 1739. The Persian army looted almost everything available in Delhi, thousands of horses, elephants, camels, jewels, cash money worth 15 crores at that time and the most precious peacock throne of Shah Jahan including Koh-e-noor diamond (Yunas, 2002). After the assassination of Nadir Shah Afshar in 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali with 16000 afghan soldiers of Persian army moved towards Qandahar. The elders of leading afghan tribes gathered in Qandahar to decide the fate of the Afghans. After a long debate a spiritual leader Sabir Shah baba decided that Ahmad Shah will be the ruler of independent Afghanistan. The decision was right and Ahmad Shah proved himself as able ruler of Afghanistan. He included the territories from Peshawar to Kashmir in the kingdom of Afghanistan (Sufi, 2005). During the reign of Shah Shuja Peshawar was used to be a winter capital of Afghanistan. The emergence of Sikhs in Punjab

weakened the position of Afghan rulers and eventually Ranjeet singh took control of Peshawar in 1822 (Habibi, 1998).

The British East India Company after conquering Bengal in 1799 was moving towards Punjab. It took forty seven more years to capture Punjab from the Sikhs in 1846. During the Sikh rule East India Company developed diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. In 1839 first Anglo-Afghan broke out but the forces of East India Company were defeated. After the annexation of Punjab East India Company controlled the area up to Peshawar and declared it as the first line of defense of India (Khan, 2009). In the meantime Russia was also advancing towards Afghanistan and it annexed the Khanates of Bokhara in 1868, Khiva in 1873 and Khokand in 1876. Russia now reached to the borders of Afghanistan.

The analysis revealed that the boundary demarcation of the state of Afghanistan was the result of the Russian advance towards the British Indian Empire. So the British Government under the command and authority of Sir Henry Mortimer Durand (Foreign secretary to Govt: of India) inked an agreement on November 12, 1893 with Amir Abdurrahman Khan of Afghanistan known as "The Durand Line Agreement" (Yunas, 2003). This agreement defines the eastern and southern limits of the state of Afghanistan. After the signatures Henry Mortimer Durand started the actualization of Durand line, which was completed during the years 1994-96 (Sufi, 2005). He writes in his biography that I travelled the whole territory on back of my horse. The agreement clearly states that both the parties regarded this agreement as full and satisfactory settlement of all differences between the British India and Afghanistan.

In 1905 Amir Habibullah Khan also ratify the Durand line Agreement saying "*I also have acted, am acting and will act upon the same agreement and I will not contravene the British in any dealing and in any promise*" (Janjua, 2009). In 1919 another treaty was signed to end the third Anglo-Afghan war between the British India and Afghanistan in Rawalpindi. In 1921 Amir Amanullah Khan for the third time ratify the Durand Line agreement in Kabul, stating "*The two high contracting parties accept the Indo-Afghan frontier as accepted by the Afghan Government under article 5 of the treaty signed at Rawalpindi on August 8, 1919*" (Hassan, 2014). Thus Amir Amanullah Khan became the third consecutive Head of the State of Afghanistan who ratifies the Durand Line Agreement. In 1930 Shah Wali Khan an Afghan Minister while on official visit to London agreed upon the treaty of Kabul of 1921 and states that it should continue as it was (Faizi, 2010).

In 1939 the 2nd world war started between the Great Britain and Germany. This time the British were facing a lot of troubles with in its own premises. The struggle for independence in India was at peak. All India Muslim League passed a resolution of dividing India into two independent states demanding a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims in Lahore on March 23, 1940. In order to get support of its own subjects the British Government sent a mission under the authority of Sir Stafford Cripps to India in March, 1942 known as "Cripps mission" (Farahi, 2005). The mission promised that the British Government is willing to give India a dominion status with a constitution and Government of its own peoples but the condition is to support and not create a situation of Law and Order in the country during the War period. The immediate response of Indian leadership was negative as it was obvious, on the hand Afghanistan's response to this mission was strange enough, they for the first time spoke against the wishes of the British Government saying that our agreements regarding the boundaries were signed with the British India and if the British Government wanted to give dominion status to India we would re-think over it (Jashree, 2009). But the British government gave no heed to these statements and regarded it as a settled issue.

In 1947 Pakistan as an independent state inherited the Durand Line Agreement of 1893 as a descendant of the British India. The Afghanistan Government opposed the very entry of Pakistan into the United Nations in September 1947. Though the diplomatic relations started in October the same year when Pakistan agreed on the issue by giving autonomy to the pakhtuns in Pakistan (Roberts, 2003). In 1948 the Afghanistan ambassador to Pakistan stated that *“our king has already stated and I as the representative of Afghanistan declare that Afghanistan has no claims on the frontier territory and even if there were any, they have been given up in favor of Pakistan”* (Farahi, 2005). In June 1949 the Afghanistan parliament proclaimed that it did not recognize the Durand line and all the agreements related to it. The assassination of first Prime minister of Pakistan by an Afghan further tensed the relations between the two countries.

In 1953 when Sardar Daud Khan became the prime minister of Afghanistan, he started support to the issue of Pukhtunistan and thus the relations between the two states became very severe, borders were sealed, transit trade of Afghanistan was stopped and speeches against one another started (Prescott, 1975). Nationalist parties with the support of Afghanistan started a movement against one unit in Pakistan. The issue of pukhtunistan remained for a very long time till the defeat of the former U.S.S.R as the U.S supported Afghan mujahedeen in the Soviet-Afghan war 1979-89.

5. International laws and international Agreements

If we study the International laws regarding the treaties it states that the agreements of the deceased states are equally valid and binding for the newly established states. So the successor state has all rights to get benefits and have control over the assets it inherits.

- Country to Country agreements can only be revised by mutual consent.
- If there is no time frame written in the agreement, the agreement becomes permanent in nature.
- It is very much clear and understandable that it is a settled issue. It is not only supported by the international law and International community but every ruler of Afghanistan ratified the Durand Line agreement including Hamid Karzai.

6. Myths and Realities, regarding the Pak-Afghan Border Issue

1. During the partition of India in 1947 the local pukhtun leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan commonly known as Bacha Khan, in alliance with All India National Congress opposed the merger of N.W.F.P (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) into Pakistan. So a referendum was held in this part of the country and the people voted to join Pakistan. But the Afghanistan parliament raised the issue in 1949 proclaiming the Durand line agreement as invalid with the emergence of new state Pakistan. To argue either they were unaware of the international laws or they were deliberately creating an environment of instability in these areas, in order to get control of the trade route to the Arabian Sea.
2. They argue that the area from River Amu (Oxus, Afghanistan) to River Indus (Pakistan) at Attock belongs to Afghanistan. This area was conquered by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1759-60. It remained under the control of Afghan rulers till 1822. Ranjeet Singh ruled this area with an iron hand declaring the famous Mahabat khan mosque as astabal. He hanged thousands of Muslims from the minarets of this mosque after the Jihad movement of Syed Ahmad Barailvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed. The creation of the state of Afghanistan was also a co-incidence in the history. Ahmad Shah Abdali a powerful general of Persian Empire born in Multan (Punjab) founded the state of Afghanistan in 1747. It was only possible after the assassination of powerful ruler of Persia, Nadir

Shah Afshar. He forcefully occupied the multi ethnic area of Pukhtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Turkmen's, Uzbeks, Balochs, and Punjabis. The area they are claiming was a part of Punjab until 1901. Only for a short period of 60 years in the long history they were able to rule this area. Now if the people of Central Asia and Iran claim on the territory of Afghanistan what will they do? The only answer to it is the boundary demarcation done by the British. The British India demarcated all the boundaries of Afghanistan i.e. with Iran, Russia (Currently, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) and British India (now Pakistan) why don't they claim on the other borders?. It is quite understandable and arguable that this claim of Afghanistan is baseless and only a myth.

3. All the boundaries of Afghanistan were demarcated by the Great Britain and the Czarist Russia. So why they are very curious to Durand Line only, the answer is very simple as Abdul Ghaffar Farahi (Former council general of Afghan counsel ate in Peshawar, Pakistan) states "it was a dream of every Afghan Ruler to have an access to the Arabian Sea".
4. They also argue that Amir Abd-ur-Rahman Khan signed this agreement in stress and duress. It is very naïve thinking that on one hand they argue of their bravery and valour that Afghans never subdue to any foreign invasion and dictation and on the other hand a powerful afghan king is signing the treaty in duress. This argument would be valid if only Amir Abd-ur-Rahman Khan signed it but it is not the case. This agreement is also ratified by Amir Habibullah Khan in 1905 and Amir Amanullah Khan in 1921.
5. The most commonly debated myth regarding this agreement is that, this agreement was done for hundred years and now it is null and void. This is totally a misunderstood and baseless statement. There is no single word in this agreement regarding a timeframe. For further detail the original text of the agreement is attached as annexure.
6. The ethnic communities living in Afghanistan have now their own independent states i.e. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and even Pukhtuns living in Pakistan are more in number than in Afghanistan. If these countries claim the lands of their ethnic based population, what would they do in that case?
7. Pukhtuns living in Pakistan are not only high in number but more prosperous than those living in Afghanistan. Even the Afghan Refugees living in Pakistan are living a good life and not ready to leave for Afghanistan.
8. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan is not entirely a pukhtun populated area. A huge population of this area is comprised of speaking Hindko, Seraiki, Shina, Khawar and Gujjar etc. languages.
9. Until now no Afghan Ruler has formally negated the "Durand Line Agreement of 1893".

7. Conclusion

Afghanistan is a difficult subject rather an enigma. It is like British constitution, nothing is, what it seems or seems what it is. Nineteenth-century explorer, Elphinstone has summed up the character of Afghans by highlighting both the negative and positive aspects of their character. He pointed out revenge, envy, avarice, liberty, faithfulness and hospitality as the ingredients of Afghan character. The British studied them very well and they deal them very well as it is evident from the fact that the very boundaries of Afghanistan were demarcated by the British. The British India was smart enough to fulfill not only their trade requirements but they were paying much more to fulfill the personal desires of the Afghan Rulers. When the British were leaving India the Afghanistan rulers were more worried and awful than the Englishmen themselves. That's why they started beating the drums of Durand Line immediately after the independence and division of India.

The motive behind this was an economic based not ethnicity or religion based. They were dreadful about their Trade route which was a dream of every afghan ruler and they deem it a great

opportunity to accomplish their dreams but in vain. The political and economic stability of both the Pakistan and Afghanistan is mutually dependent, so a mutual respect and cooperation is cry of the day. Peace and stability in Afghanistan is a key to connect South and Central Asian States. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India gas pipeline is the best example of it which is yet to materialize due to the political instability in Afghanistan. Hence the economic development of the whole region is dependent upon good friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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Annexure 1

**Agreement
Between
His Highness AMIR ABUDL REHMAN KHAN, G.C .E.I,
Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, on the one part,
And
SIR HENRY MORTIMER DURAND, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.,
Foreign Secretary to the Government of India,
Representing the Government of India, on the other part**

Whereas the British Government has represented to His Highness the Amir that the Russian Government presses for the literal fulfillment of the Agreement of 1873 between Russia and England

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

(Sd,) H.M. DURAND.

Kabul, 12th November 1893.

(Sd.) AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN.

12th November 1893 = (2nd Jamadi-ul-awal 1311)

Annexure 2

Agreement

Between

**His Highness AMIR ABUDL REHMAN KHAN, G.C .E.I,
Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies, on the one part,
And**

**SIR HENRY MORTIMER DURAND, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.,
Foreign Secretary to the Government of India,
Representing the Government of India, on the other part**

Whereas certain questions have arisen regarding the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India, and whereas both His Highness the Amir and the Government of India are desirous of settling these questions by a friendly understanding, and of fixing the limit of their respective spheres of influences, so that for the future there may be no difference of opinion on the subject between the allied Governments, it is hereby agreed as follows:

1. The eastern and southern frontiers of Highness's dominions, from Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown in the map attached to this agreement.
2. The British Government of India will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of Afghanistan, and His Highness the Amir will at no time exercise interference in the territories lying beyond this line on the side of India.
3. The British Government thus agrees to His Highness the Amir retaining the other hand that he will at no time exercise interference in Swat, Bajaur of Chitral, including the Arnawai or Bashgal valley. The British Government also agrees to leave to His Highness, who relinquishes his claim to the rest of the Waziri country and Dawar. His Highness also relinquishes his claim to Chageh.
4. The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated, wherever this may be practicable and desirable, by Joint British and Afghan Commissioners, whose object will be to

arrive by mutual exactness to the line shown in the map attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier.

5. With reference to the question of Chaman, the Amir withdraws his objection to the new British Cantonment and concedes to the British Government the rights purchased by him in the Sirkai-Tilerai water. At this part of the frontier, the line will be drawn as follows:
6. From the crest of the Khwaja Amran range near the Pasha Kotal, which remains in British territory, the line will run in such a direction as to leave Murgha Chaman and the Sharobo spring to Afghanistan, and to pass half way between the New Chaman Fort and to Afghan outpost known locally as Lshkar Dand. The line will then pass half way between the railway station and the hill known as the Mian Baldak, and, running southwards, will rejoin the Khwaja Arman range, leaving the Gwasha Post in British territory, and the road to Shorawak to the west and south of Gwasha in Afghanistan. The British Government will not exercise any interference within half a mile of the road.
7. The above articles of agreement are regarded by the Government of India and His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan as a full and satisfactory settlement of all the principal differences of opinion which have arisen between them in regard to the frontier; and both the Government of India and His Highness the Amir undertake that any differences of detail, such as those which will have to be considered hereafter by the officers appointed to demarcate the boundary line, shall be settled in a friendly and understanding between the two Governments.
8. Being fully satisfied of His Highness's good-will to the British Government, and wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objection to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war, and they will themselves grant him some help in this respect. Further, in order to mark their sense of the friendly spirit in which His Highness the Amir has entered into these negotiations, the Government of India undertake to increase by the sum of six lakhs of rupees a year the subsidy of twelve lakhs now granted to His Highness.

(Sd,) H.M. DURAND.

Kabul, 12th November 1893.

(Sd.) AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN.