TOWARDS THE ANGLO - RUSSIAN ACCORD ON AFGHANISTAN

It is widely believed that the protocol of 1885 had finally settled all border disputes between Afghanistan and Russia. But it was in 1888, that the question of northern frontier of Afghanistan once again came to the fore and engaged serious attention of the British government. The Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873 was quite vague on the position of the northern frontier due to the lack of precise geographical knowledge of the territories in question. Similarly, the 1885 protocol which made a demarcation between the Hari Rud and the Oxus, left the Russo-Afghan frontier between Khojasaleh and Pamirs largely undetermined. The region which was thus left undemarcated mainly included the unexplored area commonly known as the "Roof of the world". It was considered by the British government as a natural barrier against any Russian attack. The Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman was in favour of the British Indian government occupying the Pamirs. It is in this backdrop that the Anglo-Russian negotiations started which led to the signing of Pamirs Boundary agreement in 1895 that finally defined the northern boundary of Afghanistan.

By the end of nineteenth century, many changes took place in international relations. In the context of
Afghanistan, its ruler, Abdur Rahman died in October 1901, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Habibullah. On the other hand, Russians finding Great Britain busy in Boer war, wanted to avail this opportunity by seeking to strengthen their direct trade relations with Afghanistan.

In 1902, Germany acquired from Turkey the right to construct the railway which would connect Baghdad and the Persian Gulf with the German controlled Anatolian line. More importantly the increasing strength of German fleet, and Germany's expanding economic imperialism in the Near east posed a threat to Russian and British trade there. Besides, various other circumstances prompted the two powers to patch up their differences in Central Asia which finally led to the signing of Anglo-Russian convention on Afghanistan in the year 1907.

**PAMIR BOUNDARY AGREEMENT OF 1895**

As already stated, the Afghan boundary commission had settled the northern boundary of Afghanistan with Russia from Zulfikar Pass upto the Oxus. However the question of the settlement of the Afghan frontier to the east of Kham-i-Ab continued to be a source of discord between Britain and
Russia. In 1888, when Lord Lansdowne took over as Viceroy from Lord Dufferin, the question of "the supposedly inaccessible zone of the Pamirs,"\(^1\) cropped up. The powers involved in the Pamir boundaries question were not only Great Britain, Russia and Afghanistan but also China, which laid its claim over some portions of the Pamirs."\(^2\) The settlement of Afghanistan's north-eastern frontier assumed urgency after the Russian activities increased in that region which compelled the British government to enter into a lasting understanding with regard to the limits of Russian sphere of influence in this region.

Increasing Russian activities in the Pamirs region caused anxiety to the British and the Indian government. Although they were lacking adequate geographical information regarding the Sino-Afghan boundary, "they encouraged the Chinese claim in order to ward off the encroachment of any third party in the region."\(^3\) Further "the Russian commercial interests in Chinese Turkistan increased British apprehension as to the Russian design in the region."\(^4\) The British government and the Government of India took the view that both Afghanistan and Chinese had definite claims over certain

1. A.H. Bilgrami, 213.
2. D.P. Singhal, p. 146
4. Ibid.

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tracts in or near the Pamirs". Both the governments, were in favour of encouraging Chinese presence in the area on the one hand and to safeguard the interests of Afghanistan on the other, so that the entire region might be brought under definite occupation of either of the two powers thereby leaving little scope for encroachment by any third party i.e. Russia. The policy of British and Indian governments was that there should be no gap between the possessions of Afghanistan and China in that zone, because they were of the opinion that Russia's presence in the region would cause a threat to both the Afghan and Indian frontiers. In fact, Government of India wanted China to occupy territory in the Pamirs upto the Russian and Afghan boundaries, without any involvement of England, so as to avoid Afghan confrontation or Russian opposition.

The Russians on their part, had been active in the Pamir region for quite some time. In 1876, a Russian officer, Skobeloff, led an expedition to the Alai mountains and annexed the northern part of Pamir region into the Russian empire." Since then Russia remained busy in

6. Ibid.
7. Vambery Russia, India and Afghanistan, Quarterly Review October 1907, cited in Bilgrami.
exploring the sources of the Oxus and gathering geographical knowledge for use of the imperial government. In the summer of 1891, Colonel Yonoff along with a squadron of Cossacks was despatched from Osh to the Pamirs in order to "to shoot the Ovis Poli and to practise rifle-shooting." In fact, the target of Yonoff's mission was to expel any Chinese or Afghan detachments from the area by using forcible means and make arrangements for the proposed diplomatic settlement with Great Britain." According to Percy Sykes "the Alichur Pamir had been somewhat disputed boundary between the Afghans and Chinese long before the appearance of Russia on the scene."

On the other side, captain F.E. Younghuyband, who was on special duty in Intelligence department of the Government of India, and had some time back been engaged in exploring the country to the north of the Himalayas, was sent to "settle the Pamir frontier question". But after making an assessment of the situation, Younghusband wrote in his despatch of 22nd August 1891, that "as long as a Russian force remains on the Alai, there is nothing to be done on the spot." As the Pamirs were open valleys, neither the

8. Percy Sykes, p.179
9. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
Afghans nor the Chinese could collect a force equal to match the Russians and moreover the Government of India never contemplated that the Pamirs on its own could generate a force against the Russians."12 For that matter, the Government of India wished to guard against the territorial and political encroachment on the part of Russia in time of peace."13 Younghusband found himself powerless to oppose the Russians."14 Though Younghusband spent some time in Kashgar later, where he was joined by Lieutenant Davidson, the Russians suspected Younghusband of trying to bring the Afghans and Chinese closer. In July 1891, the two officers started their return journey to India through Pamirs and Gilgit. They got separated at Bulun-Kulun Lake from where Davidson began travelling towards the Alichur Pamir, while Younghusband continued his journey through Tashkurgan and the Taghdumbash Pamir to the village of Boza-i-Gumbaz in the Wakhan valley. At this village, Younghusband was informed by a Russian officer known as Colonel Yonoff that the Governor General of Russian Turkistan had sent him to annex the Pamirs. The Colonel also carried with him a map indicating new frontier which included Rangkul and Aksu valley.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
According to the map, it was not yet decided whether Tash Kurghan would remain with China and Tagdumbash with Russia. The Colonel told Younghusband that "Russia claims whole of Roshan and Shignan." He also made it clear that northern boundary of Afghanistan run straight from Victoria lake to the junction of the Kokcha river and the Oxus. This claim also included Badakhshan, north of Faizabad. The Viceroy of India sent a telegram to the Secretary of State in London in order to find out whether the information given to Captain by Russian Colonel Yonoff and Captain Younghusband was correct. The Viceroy felt that "Russia's attempt to occupy the northern part of Badakhshan or any part of the Great Pamir lying south of the Oxus is clearly opposed to the 1873 agreement, and the subsequent understanding." The Indian government viewed Russia's attempt to encroach upon the territory in the vicinity of the Pamirs, with serious concern. Captain Younghusband on his part wrote to W.J. Cunningham informing that "Russian claims to the Pamirs were based on the grounds that the inhabitants there had come originally from the Alai and as they were formerly tributary to the Khokand, which now belonged to the Rusians, the Pamirs

15. Foreign Secret F. Sept 1891. 72-126. Telegram dated 26th August 1891 from the Resident in Kashmir, to the Foreign Secretary, Simla.
16. Ibid. p.8
17. Ibid.
must also belong to them."\(^{18}\) Younghusband further wrote that China would have little trouble in proving its somehow strong claims over the Pamirs, because "in recent years she has shown her supremacy over the Pamirs by sending officials to collect taxes and arrange the headquarters of the different frontier posts."\(^{19}\) The Chinese could even show that the Pamirs belonged to China long before any inhabitants paid tribute to Khokand. But Younghusband’s opinion was that "no amount of reasoning would get the Russians out of the Pamirs, and if that was to be effected, it would only be by strong pressure elsewhere or war."\(^{20}\) Younghusband reported from Kashgar that the Chinese were fully expecting a collision with the Russians, and were showing much spirit in pushing forward their defence.\(^{20}\) He also found strong evidence that "the people of Kashgaria prefered Chinese to Russian rule."\(^{21}\) In the meantime a Russian colonel at the head of 30 Cossacks raided Wakhan, a country which the Russians had earlier agreed to be a part of Afghanistan and exclusively under British influence. The Colonel declared to the Wakhanis that from the Lake of the Little Pamir to the

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18. Ibid - Letter dated camp Bozai Gumbaz, 14th August 1891. from Captain F E Younghusband to w.J. cunnigham.
19. Ibid. p.16.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
Khorabart pass the area would be considered as Russian territory.

Younghusband suggested that measures be taken for strengthening the Afghan and Hindukush frontiers. He also alarmed the Amir against the danger facing his outlying provinces if there was any attack from the Russians. He advised the Amir to have British engineers for fortifying the important points in his outlying provinces as well as for the construction of telegraph line on those points. Younghusband warned the Amir that "If he refused this aid he must take whole responsibility of defence upon himself and forfeit all claims of future assistance from Britain." 22

Despite all these efforts made by Younghusband, the Russian force under Colonel Yonoff crossed the Pamirs and Bozai Gumbuz, which had earlier been acknowledged as Afghan territory under 1873 agreement. However, the British came to know about all these happenings only at the end of 1891, when Younghusband was expelled from Bozai Gumbuz by the Russian force. At the same time, lieutenant Davidson, who was travelling in the Pamirs, was also arrested at Somatash by

22. Ibid. 17.
Colonel Yonoff.\textsuperscript{23} The British government took the matter seriously and "denounced it as a breach of the Russian promises and agreement of 1873."\textsuperscript{24} From the British point of view, it was considered that Russia should not claim territories south of the river Oxus in accordance with the agreement of 1873. On the other side, Colonel Yonoff along with his Cossacks returned to the Pamirs and issued Afghans an order to retire immediately. However, stiff resistance from the Afghans led to a fighting and the Afghans were massacred mercilessly.\textsuperscript{25} The then Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman lodged a complain with Sir Mortimer Durand\textsuperscript{*} of this unfortunate action by the Russians and even threatened to withdraw from Wakhan. The British too protested, which ultimately led the Russian government to extend apologies for Colonel Yonoff's action. In this manner the Central Asian question was reopened and both the British and Russian governments started negotiations in 1992 on the question of Pamirs.

As Russians had already taken the Alichur, Rangkul Great and little Pamirs, there was possibility of their claiming Taghdumbas Pamir. In view of these developments,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Percy Skes, p. 179.
\item \textsuperscript{24} A.H. Biulgrami, p. 214.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Percy Sykes, p. 179.
\item \textsuperscript{*} Sir Mortimer Durand was a British Official who led a mission known as Durand mission to Afghanistan in 1988 (1888).
\end{itemize}
the British Indian government deputed Macartney, a British officer, to remain at somewhere near Kashgar or Yark and keep in touch with the Chinese authorities at this juncture. It was important for them to learn what steps China proposed to take about the Russian instructions in the regions which had hitherto been regarded, by both the Chinese and the British, as belonging to China. Indian government also asked the Amir of Afghanistan to establish direct communication between the British agency at Gilgit and Amir's Governor of Badakhshan. Meanwhile, the Sino-Afghan dispute over Somatash started taking place. In view of this the British Indian Government the boundaries were not delimited and proper steps were not taken to counteract Russian encroachment on the Pamirs, they would find the Russians well established even on the Hindukush and probably in the valley of the Yarkand river. The Government of India was also not sure if the negotiations on the basis of the Agreement of 1873 would ultimately lead to the evacuation of Roshan and Shignan as well as Somatash on Alichur Pamir by the Afghans - an act which would naturally offend the Amir.

26. Foreign Secret F. Sept - 1891, 280-319,
27. G.P.Tripathi, p. 94
The British took the stand that as per the 1873 agreement all the dependencies of Badakhshan were to be subject to Afghanistan, and so Shignan and Roshan were included in the description.\textsuperscript{28} The British government also suggested to Russia that "the boundary should be jointly surveyed and fixed."\textsuperscript{29} But the Russian government refused and maintained that Shighan and Roshan as being to the north side of the Amu River, were not subject to Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{30} The British also wanted to settle the north-eastern frontier as far as China's Kashgar.\textsuperscript{31} On this issue, Russia agreed to negotiate, but insisted that the agreement of 1873 must be the basis, and the boundary which starts from Sari Kul (Lake Victoria) on the east, and follows the Amu River should clearly be demarcated. It asked for the north bank to belong to Russia and the south to Afghanistan."

During his meeting with the British Ambassador Earl of Rosebery, the Russian ambassador M.de Staal stated that the Russian policy was to adhere strictly to the line of the Oxus as laid down in the agreement of 1873." The Russian government insisted that Shignan and Roshan be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid. p.12
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid. Confidential - The Earl of Rosebery to Sir Morier. foreign office, April 13, 1893.
\end{itemize}
abandoned by the Amir, so that the Khans whom he had dispossessed would then return, and that these provinces would remain under Russian influence but not necessarily in Russian occupation." 33 Besides, on the question of Darwaz that was on the Afghan side of the Oxus, the Russian ambassador said, "it did not stand exactly in the same position. It had belonged to Bokhara before the agreement of 1873, but it was not known then. The Oxus however, took a course which placed a portion of the province on the Afghan side." 34 M. de Staal also gave an understanding to Rosebery that "the Imperial government would probably ask the Amir of Bokhara to abandon the territory in question rather than diverge from the line of the Oxus." 35

Regarding the boundary to the east and south of Lake Victoria, M. de Staal suggested that it could be drawn to a point namely the course of the rivers Vakhan Daria and Vakhjir. In the opinion of the military authorities at St. Petersburgh, "this arrangement would give them the northern slope of the Hindukush", 36 To this suggestion, Earl of Rosebery strongly objected saying that it would be impossible

33. Ibid., p. 25
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
for the British government "to allow a passage between Lake Victoria and British India's frontier which would give a free access between the Afghan and British frontiers." Instead, he proposed to the Russian ambassador that "a line should be drawn eastwards from the lake to join the Chinese frontier."  

Later Earl of Rosebery wrote a letter to the Russian Ambassador underlining the two important issues: firstly, the desire of the Russian government to adhere to the strict line of the Oxus, and secondly, to fix a frontier east of lake Victoria for the Indian empire. As regards the first issue, Rosebery pointed out that it would not make a proper frontier, because the line of the Oxus would give the British government territory already under occupation of the Amir of Bokhara, while on the other hand, it would take away from the Amir of Afghanistan the territories of Roshan and Shignan of which he had long been the de facto sovereign. Therefore, he pointed out that in both the cases proper arrangements should be made according to the wishes of both the British and Russian governments and thus removing the causes of

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
irritation and laying the foundation of a permanent settlement between the two sides. Rosebery wrote, "it would be difficult for us to admit that Roshan and Shignan belonged to any other power or sovereign than the Amir." 40

As regards the second issue, Rosebery said in his communication, "as a general line what the line should be, it would certainly run eastwards of Lake Victoria, preserving the same line of latitude until it reaches the Chinese frontier, which it would be the task of a joint commission to mark out." 41 Staal admitted that the territory thus to be included on British side, did not belong to Afghanistan, but was in reality no-man's land, or common land, which must be apportioned all, between the adjacent powers." 42 His suggestion to the Russian Ambassador was that "a line drawn from the southern point of Darwaz to Lake Victoria, and east of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier, would fulfil the real intentions of the negotiators of 1872-73, and would give the fairest promise of a peaceful and permanent solution." 43 The British government thus tried its best to make a settlement through diplomacy rather than engaging in

40. Ibid., p. 34
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
a conflict with Russia on account of Roshan and Shignan."

On July 5, 1893, the Secretary of State in London informed the viceroy of India at Simla, that the Russian War office was opposed to any negotiations. He informed the Viceroy that Lord Rosebery was "averse to risk rupture when Russians are on the ground and British government is not." 44

Again on July 11, 1893, the Secretary of State informed the Viceroy that Chinese, according to Marier, had been accumulating men and stores in the most threatening position, inspite of all the warning constantly reiterated by Russia. 45

In reply, the Viceroy of India telegraphed the Secretary of State, London on 10th July, 1893, stating that Amir will certainly resent expulsion from the Trans-Oxus possessions very bitterly and we will think it inconsistent with his credit to withdraw without making some show of resistance.46

The Viceroy further wrote that "Amir has more than once charged us with sacrificing his interests, and it will be impossible to convince him or his people that he has not been deserted by us."47 Therefore, the Government of India advised the Secretary of State to prolong the negotiations.

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid. Telegram dated 6th July 1893, from Secretary of State to Viceroy.
46. Ibid. Telegram No. 10 dated 10th July 1893 from Viceroy to Secretary of State.
47. Ibid.
"first in order to make it impossible for Russia to send an expedition this year, and secondly, in order to give the Indian government time to ascertain whether it could depend upon Amir's co-operation if required." 48 However, it was made clear that the Indian government's support to Amir's occupation of Roshan and Shignan would only be provisional, and would remain a subject to discussion and division, as suggested by Lord Rosebery. The Viceroy believed that "we would risk breaking off from negotiations only if Her Majesty's government was prepared to insist at whatever cost, upon a reasonable division of the non-man's land lying beyond the Oxus. Otherwise Russia would have a free hand in Roshan and Shignan and Pamirs." 49

Significantly, the British government informed the Government of India on 13 July 1893, that "it would not be prepared to insist, at whatever cost, upon the division of the land in question beyond the Oxus, because they were averse to risk rupture with Russia." The Secretary of State informed the Viceroy that Lord Rosebery would try to obtain a strip of Wakhan north of the Panjdeh, and would keep the negotiations open as long as possible. British government was of the opinion that "the time had come to prepare the Afghan

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 29.
ruler for the evacuation of Roshan and Shignan because it would be better for him to evacuate of his own free-will than be turned out by a Russian expedition which might lead to bloodshed and create serious complications."50 The Viceroy of India was desired to prepare the Amir of Afghanistan to receive at once some officers, who would inform him of course of negotiations with Russia. It was thus clear that the British government was neither prepared to accept the responsibility to enforce the Amir's retirement from Trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan, nor ready to assist him in maintaining his occupation in opposition to the agreement of 1873. 51 Soon, a reply was sent by the Government of India to the Secretary of State stating that "they had no means of preventing Russian advance into Shignan and Roshan and to the east of Lake Victoria. Any attempt to resist such an advance would require careful and costly preparation, and under any circumstances the threat of war would be so unfavourable."52 Meanwhile a Russian Captain Vanvsky attempted to proceed from Murghabi to Darwaz via Roshan. 53

50. G.P. Tripathi. p. 98  
51. Ibid.  
52. Foreign Secret F. July 1893, Nos. 493-570 Telegram dated 10th July 1893 from viceroy to Secretary of State, London.  
53. Foreign Secret F. October 1893, 375-443 (Extract from Kabul mission Diary for the period from the 21st to the 23rd Sept. 1893).
The then Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan feared that the Russian attempt could mean to force a war upon him.\textsuperscript{54} But Captain Vanovsky was stopped by the Afghans on his way to Darwaz and he found himself unable to further advance. The Russian Officer soon left the place and followed a route across the mountains through which Colonel Yonoff himself marched into Roshan with reinforcements and sent a threatening letter to the Afghan officer in-charge of Shignan. However, Yonoff too, did not push forward. However, these developments from the Russian side enabled Durand to explain to Abdur Rahman Khan his position beyond the Oxus which was exposed to a constant threat from Russia.

On August 27, 1893, a telegram was sent to the Secretary of State, London by the Viceroy explaining the Indian stand. The Viceroy wrote that "it has been decided to admit Russia's claim to the no-man's land beyond the river Oxus, inspite of the convincing arguments which Lord Rosebery and Sir R. Morier have advanced to show that the 1873 agreement, even if interpreted literally, does not give the said "non-man's land" to Russia."\textsuperscript{55} The Government of

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid. - (Extract from the Kabul Mission Diary for the period 27th to 29th Sept. 1893).

\textsuperscript{55} Foreign Secret F. 1893, 130-186 Telegram dated 27th August 1893 from Viceroy to the Secretary of State, London, p. 12.
India urged Lord Rosebery to induce Russia for leaving Wakhan, the strip of land lying between the Panja river, and the watershed to the north of it, from Ishkashim to the Lake Victoria, in exchange for cis-oxus Darwaz.

As regards Chinese activities, O'Connor sent a letter from Peking to the Earl of Rosebery informing that Chinese steadfastly adhered to the agreement of 1884 with Russia by which China's frontier was to run due south from Uzbel. Although, they maintained their "claim to Rangkul and Aktash, they had difficulty preserving their claim to Somatash, as it was at the west of line from Uzbel and so they had not yet decided how far south the line should run." 56 In his reply Rosebery informed O. Conor that "British interests would be sufficiently guarded, if China obtained a frontier running south from Uzbel to Lake Victoria, and continuing from that point in contact with the boundary of the Afghan State of Wakhan down to the line of the Hindukush." 57

In another letter to Sir R. Morier, Rosebery wrote that Russian government would prefer an arrangement negotiated at St. Petersburgh or in London, rather than have

56. Ibid. O Connor to the Earl of Rosebery Peking, June 22, 1893.

57. Foreign Secret - F. March 1893, Nos 29-75 Telegram No. 57 (Secret) dated 27th December 1892 from Earl of Rosebery to Mr O Conor, Peking

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a commission on the spot to settle the Pamirs issue. 58 The British government was thus prepared to consider such an alternative proposal if made by the Russian government. Following this understanding the negotiation continued between the two governments through their diplomatic channels.

The Russian Ambassador intimated Rosebery on 10th April 1893, that the Russian government desired to restore the Khans their possessions in Roshan and Shignan, in the event of an evacuation of those territories by the Amir of Afghanistan."59 Rosebery then suggested to him a possible compromise. He said: "...assuming the evacuation by Afghanistan of those provinces, as well as the possibility of discovering the Khans who originally hold authority in Roshan and Shignan, that the commission which it was proposed to appoint might lay down a line such as that I had indicated west of Lake Victoria; and that north of such line the Khans should be under Russian protection, whilst those to the south of it, should be under British protection."60 Anglo Russian negotiations continued on the subject.

59. Ibid. Earl of Rosebery to Sir R., Morier. Foreign Office, June 14, 1893.)
60. Ibid. p. 17.
Staal, wrote to Rosebury saying that the delimitation of sphere of influence had become so urgent which could only be done on the basis of mutual interests. He pointed out that Russian interests preponderated to the north of the Hindukush, while British interests to the south of that range. So, it was necessary to keep in mind these interests in order to accomplish a lasting work and to arrive at an agreement which would consolidate good relations between the two sides. British government was also keen to remove all causes of future misunderstanding, and establish cordial relations between the two empires in Asia. Rosebery was happy that the negotiations were poised to secure this object. He informed the Russian Ambassador, Stall that the British government was willing to use their best efforts to persuade the Amir of Afghanistan to evacuate Shignan and Roshan on condition that "a line to the east of Lake Victoria satisfactory to them should be adopted, and that the Russian government should agree to surrender to Afghanistan the portions of Darwaz situated on the left bank of the Amu Daria, so that the question be reduced to the settlement."  

Rosebery also proposed that a line be drawn due east from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier." In

62. Ibid.
the beginning Her Majesty's government was unable to accept. Later after some discussions, the British agreed to the line being drawn from the east end of the Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier, in such a manner that it would follow the natural features of the country, and run along the rest of the hills somewhat to the south of the meridian latitude of the Lake.

As a result of the continued negotiations between the two governments regarding the sphere of influence of Great Britain and Russia in the country to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points were agreed upon: 63

1. The sphere of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul) shall be divided by a line which starting from a point on that Lake near to its eastern extremity, shall follow the crests of the mountain range running somewhat to the South of the latitude of the Lake as far as the Bendersky and Orta Bell Passes. From thence the line shall run along the same range while it remains to the south of the latitude of the said lake. On reaching that latitude it shall descend a spur of the range towards the Kizil Robat on the Aksu river, if that locality is found not

63. Foreign Secret F. July 1895, Nos. 841-880 (Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to M.de.Stall dated 11th March 1895).
to be in the north of the latitude of lake Victoria and from thence it shall be prolonged in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier. If it should be found that Kizil Robat is situated to the north of the latitude of lake Victoria, the line of demarcation shall be drawn to the nearest convenient point on the Aksu river south of that latitude, and from thence prolonged as aforesaid.

2. The line shall be marked out, and its precise configuration shall be settled by a joint commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort which is strictly necessary for its proper protection." The commission shall be composed of both the British and Russian delegates along with necessary technical assistance. Besides the British government will also arrange the Amir of Afghanistan's representation in the commission.

3. The commission shall also be given charge to report any facts which can be ascertained on the spot, bearing on the situation of the Chinese frontier, with a view to enable the two governments to come to an agreement with the Chinese government as to the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line, in such a manner as may be found most convenient."
4. Both Britain and Russia shall abstain from exercising any political influence or control, i.e. the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the line of demarcation.

5. The British government shall observe that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Amir of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or forts shall be established in it."

In the meanwhile Government of India informed the Amir of Afghanistan that the Russians were willing to give up Darwaz, and that no man’s land between Wakhan and Chinese frontier might also be made over to the Amir. As a result, his boundary would then be fixed, and it would be as secure as that on the lower Oxus. When Mortimer Durand discussed the matter with the Amir, the latter signified his willingness to retire from Trans-Oxus Roshan and Shignan on the clear understanding that he would get cis-Oxus Darwaz in exchange."64 Thus, the British government made considerable concessions to the Amir. In the meantime, Sir

64. Foreign Secret F December 1893, Nos 159-199 (Telegram, No. 51 dated 15th October 1893 from Mortimer Durand To Foreign Secretary, Simla.)
H.M. Durand on behalf of the Government of India agreed to increase the Amir's subsidy by six lakhs of rupees a year, and promised to remove restrictions on the purchase of arms and ammunition. 65 In return, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan agreed to joint delimitation of the frontier whenever necessary and practicable. 66 This led to the appointment of the Durand mission which finally succeeded in negotiating the requisite agreement with the Amir of Afghanistan.

On April 11, 1895, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan wrote to the Viceroy of India expressing his happiness over the conclusion of the agreement. 67 On his part the Viceroy of India apprised the Secretary of State, London about it. 68

Soon after the Amir was asked to provide an Afghan Governor for the strip of western Wakhan and also to appoint other officials. More importantly, he was asked to convey to the Government of India the date that would be convenient to him for the withdrawal of the Afghan troops and officials from south of the river, so that the Russian Government

65. Ibid. (Telegram, dated 7th November 1893, from Sir H.M. Durand Kabul, to the Viceroy.)

66. Ibid.

67. Foreign Secret F. July 1895, Nos 891-933 Translation of a letter from Amir of Afghanistan to the Viceroy, dated 11th of April 1895.)

68. Ibid. Telegram dated 7th May 1895 from Viceroy to Secretary of State, London.)

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could be asked to get cis-Oxus Darwaz evacuated on the same date by Bokhara. Col. M.G. Gerard was appointed as British Commissioners to work on the joint Commission for the delimitation of the Russo-Afghan boundary from lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier. After he took over the charge, Gerard was directed by the Viceroy of India to demarcate the boundary strictly in accordance with the text of the agreement and to see that no essential gap was left between the Chinese and the Afghan territory.

Thus the Pamirs boundary agreement was finally concluded between the two rival powers. It marked the end of the Central Asian or Afghan question between Great Britain and Russia which lingered for about a century. It signified a settled Afghan frontier in the north. With the inclusion of Wakhan into Afghanistan, the British and Russian frontiers were separated from each other, which meant that a sort of "buffer State" remained in continuation. The agreement paved the way for the Anglo-Russian rapprochement of 1907.

THE ANGLO - RUSSIAN ACCORD ON AFGHANISTAN

By the end of the 19th century, several things happened in international relations which also influenced the

69. Foreign Secret F. July 1895, 891-933. (The Secretary to the Government of India, to Major General M.G. Gerard, Simla, 15th June 1895.)
course of Indo-Afghan relations and finally led the British and the Russian governments to come to an understanding in 1907 on the matter of Afghanistan. Following the death of the Afghan ruler, Abdur Rahman Khan in October 1901, and the subsequent succession of his eldest son, Habibullah Khan, the Russian military officials and the Russian government started corresponding with the new Afghan ruler and officials seeking direct trade relations between the two sides. It was more so due to the British government’s involvement in the Boer war in south Africa. It was indeed a challenge to the exclusive British control over Afghan affairs as Russia had strengthened its influence in northern Persia. The Russian government’s memorandum dated 6 February 1900, stated that, "the time had come to take a definite step towards regularisation of Russia’s relations with Afghanistan." It also assured that "Russia had not and never had entertained, unfriendly feelings towards Afghanistan." Russia considered it important to inform the British government that it regarded the re-establishment of direct relations between Russia and Afghanistan as indispensable, so far as frontier matters were concerned. At the same time Russia made it

70. Foreign Secret F. January 1907, 37-52.

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clear that these relations would have no political character, and they would continue to regard Afghanistan as being outside the sphere of Russian influence. Russia believed that, "the regularisation of their dealings with Afghanistan would exercise a wholesome effect on the strengthening of the friendly relations between Russians and British." 71

The Russians did not wait for the reply or reaction from the British side. The Governor-General of Russian Turkestan advised V. Ignatieff, the Russian political agent posted at Bokhara to contact an Afghan commercial agent. Ignatieff did the same and on February 21, 1900 he sent a letter to Amir Abdur Rahman "as a first step towards the establishment of direct friendly relations between Russia and Afghanistan." 72 The Amir, forwarded the letter to the Government of India "with a note characterizing the Russian communication as highly improper and showing alarm at their movements". On receiving Amir’s note, the British took up the matter with Russia. But the Russian Foreign Minister Count Lamsdorff tried his best to justify Ignatieff’s action." Lansdowne made it clear to Russia that

71. G.P. Tripathi, p. 162.
73. Ibid.
Britain would "regard any attempt at such a change as a departure from the understanding between the two governments and a contravention of the repeated assurance of the Russian government that they considered Afghanistan to be entirely outside the sphere of this influence."\(^74\) Regarding this issue, the Russian Ambassador, M. de Staal told the Marques of Lansdowne that "he believed it to be absolutely necessary that, in regard to purely local and commercial matters, the Russian and Afghan local authorities should not be precluded from communicating with one another."\(^75\)

In September, 1902, the new Afghan Amir Habibullah Khan received another communication from Russia urging him for the opening of trade routes for Russian caravans from the railhead at Kuskk to Kabul and Herat, and offering in return special trade privileges to Afghan traders. The Amir replied stating that his policy was identical with that of his father and that "all future communications should be addressed through the Government of India.\(^76\)

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74. Percy Sykes, p. 232
75. Foreign Secret F. January 1902, 269-277.
A further memorandum of the Russian government dated February 5, 1903 clearly expressed the policy of the Imperial government and reiterated that it still maintained the terms of the memorandum of February 6, 1900. However, in their memorandum of August 20, 1903, Russia refused to accept the British government's proposal to co-operate in the restoration of the Russo-Afghan boundary pillars, because they wanted direct communication with the Afghan authorities for the settlement of all frontier matters."77 In June 1903, the Governor of Herat received letters from the Governor of Transcaspia regarding the destruction of boundary pillars and some minor incidents. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Lansdowne wrote to Count Benkendorff about it but the latter gave an evasive reply. Russia wanted to settle the matter directly with the Afghan government, while the British regarded the restoration of boundary pillars as a political matter. Whereas the British wished to settle the matter through the despatch of both the British and Russian Officers, Russia declined further discussion on the question of direct Russo-Afghan relations.

As to the future, it was clear from the verbal and written communications of the Russian government that "it did

77. Foreign Secret F, May 1905, 154-78.
not consider itself bound to respect the arrangements made between Afghanistan and England which precluded direct political relations, and, though there was no present intention to enter into such relations, it expressly reserved the right to send agents into Afghanistan."

All these circumstances, reopened the question of Anglo-Russian rivalry over Afghanistan. However, the conciliatory nature of bilateral exchanges between the two powers relaxed the tension. British Secretary of State for India Lord Lansdowne made a proposal to Viceroy of India on December 3, 1903 sketching the British policy: "we should expect Russia to recognise in the most formal manner, the position of Afghanistan as entirely within our sphere of influence and guided by us as to its external policy. Subject to this I was prepared to admit that there might be direct communication between Russian and Afghan officials as matters of purely local character and of no-political complexion." Russian government agreed to the British proposal in which it was also stipulated that any arrangement, the Russian government wanted was to be subject

78. Foreign Secret, May 1905, 154-178 (Telegram dated the 3rd December 1903 from Secretary of State for India, London to Viceroy)
to the concurrence of the Amir and the Russians were to abstain from sending agents into Afghanistan. 79

In the meanwhile, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5 had its own impact on the Anglo-Russian relations. Earlier in 1902, Britain, renouncing her policy of isolation, had concluded a treaty with Japan which was further renewed in 1905. This was done in order to maintain peace in East Asia and India besides, preserving the independence and integrity of China as well as continuation of the open door policy and mutual defence of the territorial rights and interests of Japan and Britain. The German threat and Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan as well as her internal troubles had to Russia's new friendly approach Great Britain. On the other hand, uncertain behaviour of Afghan Amir towards British Indian government and London's concern at the growing strength of the German fleet motivated the British to adopt friendly understanding with Russia. Moreover, since Afghanistan was considered as a pawn on the chess board of European diplomacy and that there had been a shift in the power politics of Europe, it seemed desirable for the British and Russian governments to come to an understanding on Afghanistan. 80 In this regard, the Anglo-French entente,

79. Ibid.

proved to be an important factor towards the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian accord in 1907. In the words of Edward Grecy, "an agreement with Russia was the natural complement of the agreement with France, it was also practical alternative to the old policy of drift." 81

With the Ottoman empire having thrown its lot with the Germans, the one important factor which had plagued Anglo-Russian relations during the nineteenth century had now ceased to exist. 82 The hostilities between Japan and Russia also came to an end by a peace treaty signed on August 23, 1905. But the Russian defeat at the hands of Japan compelled her to climb down from her former rigid stand and negotiate an accord with Britain on the question of Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. Russia agreed to divide Persia into spheres of influence with the British. The Russians had once again to forgo their long cherished ambition of obtaining a warm water outlet or their zone of influence in the south-east of Persia. It precluded the possibility of the Russians gaining proximity by land to either the Afghan or the British frontiers. 83

81. c.f. in G.P. Tripathi, p. 165.
82. A.H. Bilgrami, p. 265.
83. Ibid.
Afghanistan, the British Indian Commander-in-chief, Lord Kitchener held that any arrangement which would disturb in any manner India's fundamental relations with Afghanistan should be opposed. British India Insisted for not giving any treaty concessions to Russia even for non-political matters of local concern of the Russo-Afghan frontier.

In 1907, Lord Morley informed Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India that negotiations for an Anglo-Russian convention were taking place. However, Minto, considered that Amir's friendship was more important than an agreement with Russia and in this regard, he was not in favour of giving any concession of direct communication between Russian and Afghan officials. He wrote to Morley saying: "It seems to me that, in entering into any agreement with Russia affecting Afghanistan, unknown to the Amir, we stand to lose a friendship of incalculable value, not only in respect to the defence of India but as regards a frontier war, and to gain nothing except a mere phantom of friendship with a power who will not cease secretly to advance her own interests, regardless of any pledges she may give."\(^4\) But the British

\(^4\) Minto to Moreley, 29 May 1907, cited in Mary, Countess of Minto, India, Minto and Moreley:1905-10, (London-1934), pp. 174-75.
government due to the compulsions of international expediency as well as by the feeling that an Anglo-Russian government, would undoubtedly serve the purpose of strengthening India's security, went ahead to sign the convention on August 31, 1907.\(^8^5\) The two powers signed the accord concerning Afghanistan without a reference to its ruler. The convention constituted three agreements, one each on Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.

The agreement concerning Afghanistan was most beneficial for the British government. Russia's definition of Afghanistan as a buffer state was eliminated, and Afghanistan was declared outside her sphere of influence. Russia also promised not to send any agents into Afghan dominions and accepted Great Britain as the intermediary through which the external affairs of Afghanistan should be conducted. The two governments affirmed their adherence to the principle of equality with regard to commercial opportunity in Afghanistan. Regarding the local question of non-political nature both Russian and Afghan authorities were permitted to settle it by having direct relations with each other.

After the convention concluded, there was a general

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\(^8^5\). Bilgrami, p. 265.
satisfaction in Europe but still a problem remained with the Government of India on how to break this news to the Amir of Afghanistan. During the negotiations with Russia, the Home government did not want to inform the Amir until it was certain that there would be a Treaty. It was in fact on September 10, 1907 when for the first time the Government of India officially contacted the Amir about the accord. Amir Habibullah Khan was informed that for some time past "negotiations of a most delicate character had been in progress between Russia and Britain, largely, if not mainly, with a view to secure the integrity of Afghanistan and removal of causes of jealousy between British and Russian governments." Lord Minto in his despatch to the Amir explained about the text of the Afghan portion of the accord. He asked Habibullah Khan to send his formal concurrence to articles three and four of the convention with the least possible delay, so that the entire convention might be brought into force." Amir Habibullah replied that he was on a tour in the interior of Afghanistan, and would send a reply to the Viceroy on his return to Kabul. He was


87. Foreign Secret - F, November 1907, 26-145.
infact, annoyed that the accord was negotiated and adopted without even informing him. In his reply Habibullah forwarded the views of a Council of State which considered that "the convention destroyed the independence of Afghanistan and possessed no advantage." His policy was to keep Afghanistan completely independent and so he wanted to refrain from having any closer relations with British government and Russia.

After a long silence, the Amir sent his reply on February 11, 1908, saying that he had nothing to say about the accord signed in 1907. Further in March 1908, Indian Consul General from Persia in his despatch reported that the Amir was determined not to allow any close intercourse with either India or Russia and it was doubtful whether he would give his adhesion to the Convention. As the days were passing, Morley was getting anxious and so he reminded Minto to persuade the Amir considering the urgency of the matter. But Minto did not like Amir to be reminded as he expressed his opinion in a despatch to Morley that any pressure on the Amir would not only fail but develop some suspicion of the Amir against the British government. Minto felt that in the event of an Afghan war all the tribes on the frontier, from
Waziristan to Kashmir, would join against the British. And under the then existing political situation in India, it was impossible for the government of India to cope with such a development. On the basis of his agents in Afghanistan, Minto was convinced that the Amir would "certainly refuse to agree to the convention." He wrote to Morley:

I don't think his Council or his people will allow him to agree to it. Article III and IV of the convention are absolutely opposed to Afghan views in respect to aims of Russia. They will be looked upon as giving an opening to that Russian intrigue which the Amir and his people most fear.

The Afghan Council considered that the convention was as much harmful to the British government as it was to Afghanistan. The Council discussed the nature of the accord and argued that the convention mentioned the construction of railways in Persia. The council believed that the two powers had reserved to themselves the right of making railways and telegraphs in Afghanistan. Regarding Persia, the Council contended that it had been divided up into four

88. Anuradha Sareen, p. 27.
89. Foreign Secret Frontier. October 1908, 91-128.
parts of which two were given to Russia, one to Britain and only one part was left to Persia. The Afghan Council thus thought that independence and freedom were meaningless to Persia. In the Council's opinion the position of Afghanistan was a subordinate one. Thus both the Council and the Amir expressed their unwillingness to accept the accord. Furthermore, the Anglo-Russian agreement had weakened the position of Afghanistan. By this treaty the chances of possibility of exploiting Anglo-Russian contradiction was now reduced to a minimum as it had been done by previous Afghan ruler Dost Mohammad Khan, Sher Ali and Abdur Rahman.

When the Amir of Afghanistan did not give his consent to the convention, the British government feared that the efficacy of the entire convention would greatly be weakened and impaired, although the other parts concerning Persia and Tibet might remain operative. However, from the Russian side in 1908, the Russian Foreign Minister Isvolsky declared that whether the Amir gave his formal adhesion or not, the Russian government would treat the convention as a valid instrument. Thus the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 ended the Anglo-Russian rivalry over Afghanistan.

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90. Percy Sykes, p. 236.