



GEOPOLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE DURAND LINE

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Abstract

This article discusses the border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Durand line. The article also discusses in detail the factors that led to the creation of this line, in particular the geopolitical and economic reasons.

Keywords: Durand line, The Great Game, Treaty of Gandamak, New Great Game, Iron Emir, Durbar.

Introduction

The Durand line plays a central role in the analysis of security issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The creation of this line is a historical event that fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape of the region at the end of the 19th century, and its formation is inextricably linked to the geostrategic competition between Russia and Great Britain – the Great Game. In this process, Afghanistan acquired significant strategic importance not only as a crossroads where the interests of the two empires clashed, but also as a buffer zone where their spheres of influence adjoined. The Anglo-Afghan Wars, the Treaty of Gandamak, and finally the Durand Agreement signed in 1893 had a long-term impact on Afghanistan's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and internal political stability. As a result of this agreement, the Pashtun and Baloch tribes were divided between the two countries, disrupting the regional socio-political balance. Moreover, the Durand line was not only the product of a geopolitical decision, but also the result of a policy of pressure and encouragement implemented through economic means. Ultimately, this border issue remains one of the most contentious and controversial issues in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations today, and remains a key part of the Great Game and New Great Game in the region.



LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND METHODS

Since the article is devoted to security issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular the problem of the Durand line, the research and scientific and analytical opinions presented in it by Afghanistan studies scholar Suhrob Buranov, who has conducted consistent research on this issue, are of extremely relevant importance. In particular, the scientist's assessment of the Durand line as the main key to solving the Afghan problem and his explanation of this line with the term "Afghan Pandora's Box" opened up new horizons for future Afghan studies. In his scientific research, S.Buranov, analyzing the positions of Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Durand line, concludes that resolving the problem will create the basis for lasting peace in Afghanistan. Such opinions are also reflected in the scholar's monograph "Geopolitics of Uzbekistan in the Processes of Establishing Peace and Stability in Afghanistan". The information presented in this monographic study plays a significant role in the in-depth study of Pakistan's influence on the political situation in Afghanistan, ethno-territorial problems related to the Pashtuns, and the reasons for the emergence of the "Taliban" movement on the Afghan political scene.

It should be noted separately that S.Buranov's monograph "The Impact of the "Taliban" Factor on the Regional Security of Central Asia" is considered an important source that proposes new theories and approaches in the field of Afghan studies. This scientific work is also a major study that comprehensively analyzes the formation of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and the role of this movement in the politics of major and regional states. In this book, the scholar provides detailed information on the differences and similarities between the "Taliban 1.0" and "Taliban 2.0" governments, the establishment of the Durand line and the impact of the "Pashtunistan" factor on Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, the current state of relations between the two countries, and the impact of the threat of terrorism and extremism on regional security.

One of the scholars who studied the Durand line, originally from Afghanistan, is Sahak Nabi (now a US citizen). S.Nabi's doctoral dissertation is also on the topic "The Origins of Anglo-Afghan Relations: Clarifying the Political Status of the Durand line (1893-2021)", which is directly related to our research. This dissertation provides a detailed analysis of the historical, legal, and political aspects of the disputed border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Durand line. It also notes that this line was established on the basis of an agreement between the aforementioned



historical figures, which resulted in the loss of approximately half of Afghanistan's Pashtun population and significant amounts of land in areas such as Swat, Bajaur, Waziristan, Chagai, and the Khyber Pass. According to the scientist, the Durand line remains an "unsolvable knot" due to legal uncertainties, ethno-national claims, and geopolitical rivalries. S.Nabi recommends reconsidering existing approaches.

In writing this article, retrospective, comparative, and content analysis methods were used.

DISCUSSION

When discussing security issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is first necessary to carefully examine the reasons for the establishment of the Durand line. The geopolitical and economic reasons for the creation of this line are explained in detail below:

Geopolitical reason. It is known that the creation of the Durand line is a product of the Great Game between the Russian and British empires. Afghanistan was not only a crossroads where the interests of the largest empires of the time clashed, but also a region where the spheres of influence of Britain and Russia adjoined. Therefore, politics in Afghanistan was forced to conduct itself under the pressure of these countries. Moreover, the Anglo-Afghan wars that took place in a short period of time played an important role in the formation of Afghan statehood, in particular, its borders. Therefore, in order to provide detailed and scientifically sound information about this line, it is appropriate to also explain the term Great Game.

Great Game: This theory is a concept that describes the geopolitical games of powerful states aimed at controlling the regions of Afghanistan, Central and South Asia. The phrase Great Game was first used by British Empire Captain Arthur Conolly. The term became very popular among academic and political circles after R.Kipling introduced it in his novel "Who", published in 1901. R. Kipling predicts that the Great Game will continue indefinitely and without end, writing: "Only when all mankind has perished will the Great Game come to an end. Not before this"[2]. In confirmation of this idea, it is worth noting that the Great Game is still ongoing in Afghanistan, but its participants have changed and their ranks have expanded, causing new problems.



British historian Peter Hopkirk has provided valuable information about the hidden aspects of the Great Game in Afghanistan in his work, while Pakistani researcher Abdul Hamid Khan provides detailed information about the essence of Kipling's theory in his dissertation. In particular, A.Khan, in his remarks, evaluates Kipling's theory as a product of the British Empire's imperialist views on the East, especially Afghanistan[3].

After the fall of Napoleon's rule in France, Russia became Britain's main rival on the international stage. The rivalry between the two countries also had a negative impact on the Central Asian region. Prolonged wars, intrigues, and espionage eventually led to the Great Game between the two powers. Afghanistan was an impoverished tribal state that served as a key to the geopolitical ambitions of the two empires in Asia[4]. Consequently, Great Britain, seeing the expansion of the Russian Empire through the conquest of Central Asia as a threat, invaded Afghanistan in 1838 to bring a pro-British leader to power. Thus began the First Anglo-Afghan War (1838–1842). The British saw the Russian Empire's southward movements as a direct threat to British India. Britain planned a preemptive strike against Afghanistan, believing that if Russia's sphere of influence expanded into Afghanistan, Russia would target India as well. The British campaign, however, failed due to strong resistance from Afghan tribes. Britain then changed its strategy to maintain Afghanistan as a buffer state between the Russian Empire and British India.

Tajik scholar S.Mirzoyev quotes M.Durand's book "The Making of the Border" in his doctoral dissertation on political science: "The importance of the border region is mainly due to the fact that Russia was advancing and its military fortifications were close to the British borders. Russia was mentioned above because of the discussions about the possibility of an attack on India. The great empire, the "shadow" that Napoleon predicted, is growing in various directions. Central Asia has already become its property. They are cautiously approaching the borders of British India. Today they are "swallowing up" the Pamirs without warning, tomorrow this fate may befall Chinese Turkestan or part of Persia (now Iran)"[5].

Meanwhile, the Russian Empire, based on its "Turn South" policy, captured Tashkent in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868. The British, after conquering Punjab in 1849, invaded Sikh territory west of the Indus River[6]. In 1878, the British began to invade Afghanistan again, as the Afghan government rejected the British diplomatic mission and accepted representatives of the Russian delegation. This resulted in the Second



Anglo-Afghan War, which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Gandamak, effectively transferring sovereignty of Afghanistan to British control[7]. The tribal territory was also divided into roughly equal spheres of influence[6]. The cartoon depicted the impact of the Great Game between the British and Russian empires on Afghanistan at that time.

The demarcation of Afghanistan's territorial borders by the British and Russian empires between 1887 and 1895 laid the foundation for the emergence of new Afghan statehood. German scholar Konrad Schetter argues that Afghan statehood arose primarily as a result of demarcation rather than as a national declaration of political will or purpose[8]

The process of signing the Durand line agreement is still a mystery to many, as even in the scientific literature there are many controversial opinions about the meeting between Abdur Rahman and Durand and its results. Tamim Ansari's book "Games without rules" details this: In 1893, 13 years after seizing power from the British, the "Iron Emir" met with a British delegation from India and hastily formalized agreements to further consolidate his rule. The British proposed General Frederick Roberts to lead their delegation, but Abdur Rahman told them briefly and sharply to send someone else. Roberts was the "symbol" of the second British invasion of Afghanistan (the Second Anglo-Afghan War), and the Afghans hated him so much that no Afghan ruler, even as the "Iron Emir" would make a deal with him. Therefore, the British appointed Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of British India, to replace him.

It is worth noting that Amir Abdur Rahman came to the meeting without advisors, tribal chiefs, or representatives of the people. He met with M.Durand alone. The British diplomat proposed a southern border for Afghanistan, and Amir Abdur Rahman accepted it[9]. The agreement concluded on the basis of the agreement was of decisive importance in determining the border between Afghanistan and British India at that time. Regarding the "Durand line" agreement and the processes involved, Amir Abdur Rahman himself recalls: "After the first official meeting, we immediately began negotiations, because Mortimer Durand was a shrewd politician and knew Persian well. This created the basis for the rapid implementation of all negotiations. Thus, security and alliance were established between the two countries"[10]. Indeed, while Amir Abdur Rahman was aware of the potential consequences of making a deal, he had few other options. He was aware that unrest in the border areas would continue



to undermine British authority, but he preferred to avoid direct conflict with the British.

The British also saw the Durand line as an opportunity to “contain” Afghan interests in Baluchistan. Amir Abdur Rahman, on the other hand, was forced to rely on British aid and subsidies to increase his power and prestige in Afghanistan. As Amir Abdur Rahman himself noted, it was an unwise step for the British to impose a heavy cost on the Indian treasury to acquire and maintain possession of these scattered lands on the Afghan border, but Amir Abdur Rahman believed that his actions slowed the imperial advance and provided the stability necessary for reforms in Afghanistan[11]. On the contrary, other sources state that the development of events did not actually happen as described above.

To achieve his ultimate goal, Abdur Rahman needed a specific territory over which he could rule. Therefore, he accepted the Durand line. The reason for this was to keep the country isolated from the outside world. As soon as the border was drawn, the emir almost completely closed it off. After that, few Afghans were allowed to travel abroad, and visitors were rarely allowed into the country. The emir's government even controlled what historical monuments, artifacts, and information could be brought in. To further enhance the effectiveness of his policy of isolating the country from the outside world, he banned the construction of railways. By isolating Afghanistan, he cut it off from modern development, but he was able to move freely to implement his plan. He had to resolve several issues before he could begin his grand plan[9]. At this point, one can also cite analyses that refute these views: During the 21-year reign of Amir Abdur Rahman, British and Russian interests were balanced, Afghan tribes were united, and Afghanistan was reorganized as a modern state[12]. In fact, Abdur Rahman fought 40 tribal wars during his reign, winning them all, but victory alone wasn't enough. To prevent his defeated subjects from regrouping, he implemented a policy that the Assyrians had used three thousand years earlier and that Stalin would try a few decades later. He moved people across the country, separating them from their natural allies and moving them among people they did not trust[9].

Other sources, however, have a completely opposite view. According to them, the agreement on the Durand line was concluded and signed in good faith. On November 13, 1893, the day after the agreement was signed, the emir held a public Durbar (“Durbar” means “Council” in Pashto), to which many Afghan tribal leaders were invited. The emir explained to the audience the brief content and terms of the



agreement. He therefore thanked Mortimer Durand and the other members of the mission for the wise way they had shown in resolving the differences. His speech was marked by satisfaction and contentment with the agreement[13]. For the line was not defined in the treaty as the boundary of India, but as the boundary of the Amir's (Abdur Rahman) possessions, and beyond which no party could exert influence. This was because the British government did not intend to incorporate the tribes into its administrative system, but only to extend its [British] authority and to exclude the Amir's authority from the territory east and south of the line. Internationally, this was of no importance, as the emir had renounced sovereignty beyond its borders[14]. However, a number of sources present conflicting views on the agreement. Amir Abdur Rahman was reluctant to conclude the agreement and opposed it because he feared that formal recognition of a sphere of influence between British India and the border tribes of his country would be a "prelude" to permanent annexation. The tribesmen's concerns about the agreement were particularly significant. After all, the agreement would formally end their "hard-fought independence".

Under the main provisions of the Durand Agreement, most of the "free" Pashtun tribes remained under British rule. The existing agreement divided the Pashtun tribes into two parts along a border line. In particular, tribes (Mohmandis, Shinwaris, Afridis, Waziris, Kokari, etc.) were separated as a result of the Durand line [5], but these tribes, and the Pashtuns in general, still did not recognize the border line.

Experts point to the three Anglo-Afghan wars as the first phase of the Great Game, while they interpret the period of the Soviet Union's limited entry of troops into Afghan territory (the Soviet-Afghan War) as the second phase. The third phase of the Great Game is characterized by the entry of US-led NATO forces into Afghanistan. The period of the official withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in 2021 and the subsequent re-occupation of Kabul by the Taliban movement can be described as the New Great Game. Therefore, regardless of the period, the Durand line remained a negative legacy of the Great Game. It could also be seen as a result of the ongoing confrontation between the powers in Asia.

Barnet Rubin, director of research at the Center for International Cooperation at New York University, writes in Foreign Affairs: "The British established a three-tiered border to separate their empire from Russia. The first border separated the areas of the Indian subcontinent under direct British administration from those under Pashtun control (the current line separates the areas administered by the Pakistani state from



the Federally Administrative Tribal Areas). The second border, the Durand line, separated the Pashtun tribal areas from those under Afghan administration. This now forms the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The outer border Afghanistan's borders with Russia, Iran, and China defined the British sphere of influence. This now forms the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The outer border Afghanistan's borders with Russia, Iran, and China defined the British sphere of influence[15].

Economic reason. The creation of the Durand line was not only a geopolitical reason, but also an economic incentive for Afghanistan. In particular, according to the Durand line agreement, the British increased their subsidies (grants) to 60,000 pounds sterling per year in exchange for the 40,000 square kilometers of territory lost by Afghanistan[16]. They gradually increased financial subsidies under this agreement in order to encourage Amir Abdur Rahman Khan to accept the border. These subsidies were increased from 1.2 million rupees to 1.8 million rupees per year[17][18]. The British also guaranteed the protection of Afghanistan in any event. Boundary commissions were established, and the final border was drawn in 1897[16].

CONCLUSION

Based on the historical facts we have noted above, it is appropriate to emphasize that the creation of the Durand line was a negative consequence of the Great Game and that the border conflict became even more acute after the formation of the state of Pakistan. It can be concluded that the New Great Game in the region, which is still ongoing, is preventing this problem from being resolved in the near future.

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