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Securitizing British India: A New Framework of Analysis for the First Anglo-Afghan War

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SECURITIZING BRITISH INDIA: A NEW FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS FOR THE FIRST
ANGLO-AFGHAN WAR

by

MARK HONNEN

Under the Direction of Ian C. Fletcher

ABSTRACT

The First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-1842 was one of the most disastrous conflicts in the history of the British Empire. It caused the death of thousands and the annihilation of the Army of the Indus. Yet this defeat came after a successful invasion. In analyzing the actions of officials and officers of the British imperial state and the East India Company leading up to and during the invasion, I will argue that these actions served to securitize British India. Securitization is a process by which an actor takes a series of steps to persuade an audience that a specific referent object faces a critical and existential threat. I contend in this thesis that the need for security was used to justify, in the eyes of both British and Indian audiences, the continued territorial expansion and military dominance of the British in India and its borderlands.

INDEX WORDS: India, Afghanistan, Britain, Russia, British Empire, East India Company, First Anglo-Afghan War, Great Game, Securitization

SECURITIZING BRITISH INDIA: A NEW FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS FOR THE FIRST
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by

MARK HONNEN

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Mark Francis Honnen
2013

SECURITIZING BRITISH INDIA: A NEW FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS FOR THE FIRST
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The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government

1. INTRODUCTION

The First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-1842 was one of the most disastrous conflicts in the history of the British Empire. This war caused the death of thousands and the absolute annihilation of the Army of the Indus. This failure, however, occurred after an overwhelmingly successful invasion and the British establishing residence in Kabul. My thesis will analyze the actions of imperial officials leading up to and during the invasion. I will demonstrate that these actions were a deliberate attempt on behalf of imperial officials to securitize British India. Securitization contends that an actor implements a series of practices in an attempt to persuade an audience that a specific referent object faces a critical and existential threat. These processes are meant to convince the audience that immediate action is necessary, and therefore, empower the securitizing actor to implement a new policy.¹ Further, I contend that the security of British India was elevated to the status of an authoritative discourse, and therefore, justified the continued territorial expansion and militarization of the East India Company. The value of India and the need to defend it was clearly articulated in both official and unofficial sources. I will also show that analyzing history through the lens of securitization offers historians a new and beneficial tool. It provides critical insight into how imperial policies were produced, enacted, and legitimized. This acumen can provide new vistas into understanding how governmental policy has been developed in both the past and present.

1.1 History and Historiography

The First Anglo-Afghan War was one of the most grievous affairs in the annals of British military history. The Army of the Indus passed through the Bolan Pass in the spring of 1839 in an attempt to supplant the Afghan sovereign, Dost Mohammad Khan, and install the exiled Shah

¹ Thierry Balzacq, *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3.

Shuja. Although the initial march on Kabul was an overwhelming success, the war would end in British humiliation and the death of approximately 16,000 soldiers and camp followers.² In order to understand the war, and the strategies used to justify it, it is necessary to place the actions of British officials within the contemporary strategic environment. In order to establish the context, I will provide an overview of the Asian geopolitical climate, the state of Afghan politics, the East India Company's territorial expansion in India, and a brief overview of the major events that shaped the perspective of British imperial officials and their intended audiences.

Empires have been forced to find ways to govern large landmasses which house a multitude of heterogeneous populations. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Russians and Chinese under the Qing dynasty significantly increased the size and reach of their empires. Both of these empires sustained their territorial expansion through the “creative mixes of ruling practices, their distinctive solutions to the intermediary problem, and their exploitation of difference to enhance imperial power.”³ Due to the large number of diverse groups in Eurasia, rulers had to recognize and utilize difference. In addition, these different groups constantly migrated and moved throughout the continent. The movement of large groups meant the borderlands of empire were constantly shifting and were extremely fluid. These migrations and intergroup communication made Asia an extremely dynamic space. This mobility meant that fixing borders was disadvantageous.⁴ However, the strategy of amorphous boundaries had to be adapted once the Russian and the Chinese, and eventually the British, expanded to the point where their frontiers started to overlap. In order to control the mobile populations in their borderlands, these empires were forced to delineate clear boundaries. These borders were meant to control the no-

² Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994), 260.

³ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 216.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 273.

mads of Asia.⁵ The Chinese and the Russians, however, were not the only players in Asia at the time of Europe's rapid expansion in the continent.

Several great land empires dominated the political situation in Central Asia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These Islamic empires included the Ottomans, the Safavids of Iran, and the Mughals of the Indian subcontinent. According to C.A. Bayly, the power of these land empires had begun to wane: "The demise of the Muslim land empires was a critical condition of the rise of European dominance across inland Eurasia and north Africa."⁶ The state of these Islamic empires provided both challenges and possibilities for the British and the Russians. Various Central Asian communities offered military allies, new trading partners, and local administrators. Each of these groups shaped the way that Europeans were able to expand into Asia. However, the fragmentation of these empires also created a serious threat. Without a strong centre, these different communities possessed relatively limited strength, and therefore, could potentially be absorbed into a rival power's sphere of influence. The Central Asian arena was populated by a multitude of local players who were critical to shaping the political environment.

Afghanistan during the first half of the nineteenth century presented another type of political space. It was fractured and consisted of multiple political centres.⁷ These polities were governed by different social groupings "as a complex patchwork of cultural groupings and units of communal identity."⁸ These various communities cooperated, competed, and engaged in conflict. In addition, the fractured nature resulted in continuous intergroup rivalries. These rivalries made

⁵ Ibid., 216.

⁶ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 16.

⁷ B.D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

⁸ Ibid., 9.

internal disorder one of the central themes in Afghan history.⁹ The collapse of the Durrani Empire in the early nineteenth century created one of the most unstable periods in Afghan history; it also coincided with the initial encounter between the Afghans and the British.¹⁰ This initial interaction, and the different styles of governance, resulted in the British constructing an image of Afghanistan as a barbaric and anarchic territory.¹¹ This perception would shape British policy towards Afghanistan into the present. Based upon the emerging fear of internal revolt in India, an unstable polity on Britain's frontier was especially threatening.

The East India Company's expansion into the subcontinent was primarily driven by revenue. India was seen as a tributary province.¹² The dividends it produced were dependent upon land revenue and a local intermediary's ability to collect funds.¹³ This ability was directly dependent upon the continued stability of native rulers. Since India's value depended on land revenue, the East India Company was driven towards territorial expansion. Territorial expansion was seen as a way to increase profitability and balance the budget.¹⁴ According to D.A. Washbrook "to sustain this continuous process of expansion, the government of India from the mid-1820s maintained a permanent standing army totaling 235,000 men, which represented the preponderant military force in all of Asia. Inevitably, its military institutions and purposes came to shape both state and society." He refers to the dominance of the military and the territorial expansion it enabled as "military fiscalism."¹⁵ The expectation to collect revenue from local rul-

⁹ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 343.

¹⁰ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹² P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), 321.

¹³ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 307.

¹⁴ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 324.

¹⁵ D.A. Washbrook, "India, 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3:402.

ers, and the willingness to use military force, were central to the governance of British India. This situation, however, was extremely problematic.

The vulnerabilities, as well as the strengths of the British Empire, shaped the strategies that were employed in Central Asia, especially during the early stages of expansion. According to Linda Colley, one of Britain's greatest limitations was its small population.¹⁶ This meant that Britain was not independently capable of mobilizing an army large enough to control large territories, especially in Asia, and therefore relied heavily on local administrators and soldiers to maintain the empire. For example, the Indian Army was made up of only 16 European regiments, compared to 170 sepoy regiments.¹⁷ Therefore, while the British sought to employ progressively more coercive tactics of control, they were also forced to maintain the support and longevity of local elites and intermediaries.¹⁸ The profitability of India, and its value to London, was dependent upon local leaders accepting British rule. The Indian government recognized this situation and realized that the internal threat posed by local unrest would undermine the value and sustenance of British rule. It was especially afraid that turmoil on the frontier would incite rebellions. A defensive strategy, therefore, was not acceptable. They had to continue to move the frontiers as far from Company territory, and their internal enemies, as possible.¹⁹ In addition to local threats, the Indian government had to account for the expectations of London.

The imperial government greatly influenced the strategies available to the East India Company. In the late eighteenth century, the Crown and Parliament became increasingly involved in Indian affairs.²⁰ British engagement in the subcontinent escalated when Napoleon in-

¹⁶ Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 5.

¹⁷ Washbrook, "India 1818-1860," 3: 402.

¹⁸ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 241.

¹⁹ M.E. Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798-1859* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 11.

²⁰ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 245.

vaded Egypt, threatening British influence in India and the balance of power in Europe. London's involvement in Indian affairs placed strict limits on continued expansion beyond the boundaries established by 1818. According to M.E. Yapp

forward policy was expressly and explicitly forbidden by the East India Company Directors, by the British Government, and by Act of Parliament. Precautionary measures of defence would not be tolerated; British India was allowed to go to war only if it were attacked or in imminent danger of attack. These rigid prohibitions, however, could be dissolved by the solvent of the external enemy.²¹

Yapp also argues that the external enemy that became most threatening was Russia.²² The Indian government had to demonstrate that its actions were in response to an urgent external threat. In order to justify action, "Britain and British India required a language in which they could discuss the allocation of resources between them, a language that would mean all things to all men. This language was supplied by the strategy of defence against the external enemy."²³ The defence of India, or *security*, served to justify the actions of British imperial officials. This shared language allowed the two governments to act in unison and made imperial policy comprehensible to the metropolitan public.

British imperial officials had to account for two distinct audiences when developing and implementing plans for the defence of India. The imperial officials had to devise strategies that were both acceptable throughout the metropole and that would maintain their influence over local intermediaries. Accounting for these distinct audiences made it increasingly difficult to govern India. As Burbank and Cooper argue, "the variety of repertoires of power and the diversity of interests in distant spaces made it hard for colonial powers to develop a coherent imperial imagi-

²¹ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 159.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19.

nary.”²⁴ The First Anglo-Afghan War was an attempt to manage both groups with a single political action and the discourse of security.

Let us now turn to the major events that led up to the First Anglo-Afghan War. These events informed British beliefs and the language used to describe the geopolitical situation. First, we will examine the various events that took place in Europe and their influence closer to Afghanistan. The first major event was Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798.²⁵ Napoleon’s presence in Egypt caused a great deal of consternation in both London and Calcutta, as both governments recognized the threat posed to British interests in the subcontinent. Shortly after Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt, Tsar Alexander took control of Georgia from Persia. The Persian Shah requested British support to counter the Russian invasion. Wishing to prevent an agreement between Russia and France, the British refused to support the Shah.²⁶ The British and the Ottomans would eventually defeat the French mission to Egypt in 1802. Although the British were concerned about a Franco-Russian alliance, the opposite ended up happening. Rather than challenging the British in India, Napoleon decided to invade Russia in June 1812. To the surprise of statesmen throughout Europe, Russia not only brought the French invasion to a halt, but went on the offensive and eventually entered Paris on March 30, 1814. The Russian victory removed the Napoleonic threat, and resulted in British newspapers praising the heroism of the Russian Army.²⁷ After Napoleon’s defeat, the great powers of Europe convened the Congress of Vienna to establish the European balance of power. The Congress curbed Russia’s expansionary desires in Europe. Asia, however, was left open to conquest.²⁸

²⁴ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 289.

²⁵ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

If the Congress stabilized Europe, Russian relations with the Muslim empires on its southern borders were another matter. Russia penetrated into Persia, resulting in the Treaty of Gulistan (1813), ceding various Persian domains to Russia. Neither the Persians nor the Russians were satisfied with the lines drawn by this treaty. Therefore, in December 1825, Shah Abbas Mirza attacked Russian territory in an attempt to reclaim the land lost in the earlier conflict. While the Shah was initially successful, Tsar Nicholas eventually drove Persian troops back to modern day Armenia. As defeat became imminent, the Persian Shah again reached out for British support and again was rebuffed. This resulted in a further loss of British prestige throughout Central Asia, and Persia becoming a Russian protectorate.²⁹ However, the Russians did not stop in Persia. In 1829, Russia gained control of Ottoman Erzerum. Shortly after the fall of the fortress city, the Ottomans surrendered on September 14, 1829. Within a relatively short period, the Russians had defeated the two great southwestern Asian empires, the Ottomans and the Persians.³⁰ This new strategic situation caused great concern in the British and Indian governments. Shortly after defeating the Ottomans, the Russians came to the aid of the Sultan. In 1831, the revolt of Mohammed Ali in Egypt challenged the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans requested British support, but the foreign secretary Viscount Palmerston and the British government were indecisive. The Russians quickly seized the opportunity and sent their ships to Constantinople. The Russian presence halted Ali's march to Anatolia.³¹ Again, the British looked as though they were incapable of employing force when necessary, and the Russians therefore appeared to be the rising power in Central Asia. With Persia and the Ottomans under Russian influence, Afghanistan was seen as the last critical buffer between India and Russia.

²⁹ Ibid., 111.

³⁰ Ibid., 115.

³¹ Ibid., 149.

Events in Afghanistan also shaped the actions of the Indian governor-general Lord Auckland. The weakening of the great Islamic empires of Asia exacerbated local rivalries. In Afghanistan, Shah Shuja and Dost Mohammad Khan competed for control of Kabul. In 1834, the forces of Dost Mohammad Khan defeated the army of Shah Shuja outside of Kandahar. In this conflict, Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, supported Shah Shuja and the result shaped the strategic environment for the next several decades.³² Dost Mohammad Khan and Ranjit Singh remained bitter rivals. Dost Mohammad Khan requested Russian support against Ranjit Singh in October 1835.³³ He also sought British support in 1836. The British, however, had already signed a defensive treaty with Ranjit Singh in 1809.³⁴ Therefore, Auckland informed Dost Mohammad Khan and the East India Company's Board of Directors that his policy was to not interfere in Afghan-Sikh affairs.³⁵ Nevertheless, the British still desired commercial and diplomatic relations with the Afghan court. Sir Alexander Burnes was dispatched to Kabul on September 20, 1837. Captain Ivan Vitkevich, a Russian agent, was sent to the Afghan court on December 24, 1837. Initially, Dost Mohammad Khan seemed to prefer British support, but this changed after Auckland sent a threatening ultimatum. Still seeking support against Ranjit Singh, and receiving no support from Britain, Dost Mohammad Khan hosted Vitkevich in the Bala Hisar on April 28, 1838.³⁶ While the drama in Kabul was playing out, the Persian Shah and his Russian advisors besieged Herat, one of the key cities in the defense of Afghanistan and India. Although the situation in Herat looked dire, the Herati defenses held. While they had failed to act on earlier occasions, the British finally took action. On June 19, 1838, a naval force landed troops at Kharg Is-

³² Ibid., 168.

³³ Ibid., 168.

³⁴ Karl Meyer and Shareen Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 31.

³⁵ Ibid., 59.

³⁶ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 174.

land in the Persian Gulf. This action, and the threat it posed to the Persian heartland, forced the Shah to retreat.³⁷ Therefore, while the Russians had gained access to the Afghan court in Kabul, they were denied control of Herat. This chain of events informed the subsequent actions of British imperial officials and the way metropolitan and Indian audiences understood them. Placing the First Anglo-Afghan War in context is vital to analyzing the processes and outcome of securitization.

My thesis responds and contributes to the larger historiography of the “Great Game.” The traditional trope of the Great Game revolves around an imperial rivalry between the British and Russian empires for control of the Eurasian heartland. In the popular works of Shareen Brysac, Karl Meyer, and Peter Hopkirk, the Great Game is told as an exciting and clandestine adventure story, which praises the courage and ingenuity of its individual players. The destruction caused by the imperial rivalry is lost in their prose. Recent authors, like B.D. Hopkins and James Hevia, have sought to problematize this myth. Hopkins suggests that this narrative misconstrues the sources available in the imperial archive and that it masks the importance of local circumstances and actors.³⁸ Hevia argues that the Great Game was not a clandestine affair, but rather a deadly conflict that resulted in the militarization of the British state in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁹ By analyzing the actions and language of imperial officials during the First Anglo-Afghan War, I will expand on Hevia’s argument. I will demonstrate that the Great Game resulted in the militarization of the British state before the middle of the nineteenth century. The British deliberately employed the “arts of governance” to increase their control within the subconti-

³⁷ Ibid., 184.

³⁸ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 35.

³⁹ James Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11.

ment.⁴⁰ In addition, my research will show not only that imperial rivalry in Asia resulted in significant suffering, but also that the deliberate actions and decisions of imperial actors produced this result. It will, I hope, continue to challenge the Great Game trope that has dominated the narrative for decades. Finally, William Dalrymple's *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-1842* was published in 2013. Due to the recent release of this book, it has played a limited role in the development of my thesis.

1.2 Framework and Methodology

Discourse is central to the construction of reality, and has been vital to the development of history. I will employ a Foucauldian definition of discourse. The U.S. historian Gail Bederman explains discourse as a “set of ideas and practices which, taken together, organize both the way a society defines certain truths about itself and the way it deploys social power.”⁴¹ A Foucauldian approach allows an analyst to study rhetoric and policy, and the ways they establish and maintain power relationships. This definition aligns with scholars of securitization, like Thierry Balzacq, who are greatly influenced by social theory. According to Balzacq, these scholars “talk about securitization primarily in terms of practices, contexts, and power relations that characterize the construction of threat images.”⁴² What becomes clear is that discourse is not simply a set of statements, but incorporates a series of practices that are shaped by context and that are used in order to manage society. This basic understanding of discourse helps us to define securitization and its components.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁴¹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 24.

⁴² Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 1.

Securitization Theory was initially articulated in 1997 by Barry Buzan and the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. However, the philosophical approach employed by Buzan was ill-equipped for empirical studies. In order to remedy this shortcoming, Thierry Balzacq expanded upon Buzan's methodology. According to Balzacq, securitization is defined

as an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block development.⁴³

In this definition, Balzacq makes several points that are critical to understanding the framework. First, he suggests that an actor can employ a vast array of techniques in order to securitize a referent object. Balzacq contends that an analyst must consider the multiple strategies employed by policy-makers in order to study the securitizing move. Second, Balzacq makes it clear that context is central to understanding actions. Context informs both the options available to the actor and the knowledge possessed by the audience. Third, he suggests that the threat must be critical. The urgency of the threat justifies immediate action to ensure the survival of the referent object. Finally, the audience is central to his definition. The actions of the securitizing actor are designed to influence an empowering audience. Successful securitization, therefore, depends upon the target audience accepting the securitizing actor's argument. In each chapter of my thesis, I will identify the securitizing actor, target audience, referent object, referent subject, practices utilized, implications, and the desired policy sought by the securitizing actor. By identifying each of these parts, I will be able to analyze not only what policies were implemented, but discuss why they were pursued and what results they produced.

⁴³ Ibid., 3.

Securitization is codified by three primary assumptions. The assumptions are “1) the centrality of the audience; 2) the co-dependency of agency and context; 3) the structuring forces of the *dispositif*, that is a constellation of practices and tools.”⁴⁴ The securitizing actor focuses its energies on the “empowering audience.” An “empowering audience is the audience which: a) has a direct causal connection with the issue; and b) has the ability to enable the securitizing actor to adopt measures in order to tackle the threat. In sum, securitization is satisfied by the acceptance of the empowering audience of the securitizing move.”⁴⁵ The success of a securitizing move is dependent upon the context that informs it. “Thus, the performative dimension of security rests between semantic regularity and contextual circumstances.”⁴⁶ The processes of the securitizing actor do not take place in a vacuum. Rather, they are informed by external circumstances. These exogenous forces provide the securitizing actor with both possibilities and limitations, and shape the way the audience understands these processes. Finally, these different processes are intersubjective and must be studied together.⁴⁷ These assumptions require a more holistic analysis of securitization. An analyst must understand the interaction between actor, audience, context, and processes. Each of these factors shapes the discursive environment and the success of the securitizing move.

The centrality of the audience, intersubjectivity and co-dependency of agency and context suggests that the process of securitization is dialogic. These arguments closely mirror Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of dialogism, intertextuality, and heteroglossia. Like Balzacq, Bakhtin make it clear that discourse is a “social phenomenon.”⁴⁸ In order to advance securitization, I will employ

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259.

one additional aspect of Bakhtin's theory, the idea of *authoritative discourse*. He explains that the

authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain.⁴⁹

According to Bakhtin, certain words become elevated and assume unquestionable influence.

Once a word is accepted as *authoritative*, it shapes all future dialogues. Discussions about this discourse are no longer about if a subject warrants attention, but how it should be understood. I contend that successful securitization will result in *security* becoming an *authoritative discourse*. If a referent object is successfully securitized, the debate is no longer about whether the referent object should be protected, but how. Achieving the status of *authoritative discourse* infuses a word and its advocates with newfound power. In order to demonstrate that security had been elevated to the level of an *authoritative discourse*, I will expand my study beyond strictly government documents. I will supplement these official sources with discussion in the periodical press in the months immediately following the invasion. These journalistic sources will show that the defence of British India had not simply become a priority of government but had also won the support of the press, which in turn influenced public opinion.

1.3 Terminology

In this thesis, I will utilize various terms that I recognize are potentially problematic, in part because we have inherited them from the imperial and colonial past. The first term I will be using is *Central Asia*. The location of Central Asia, like any geographic region, is fluid and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 342.

changes based upon the geopolitical and strategic situation.⁵⁰ I will use the term throughout this thesis because imperial officials and other writers used it. During the early nineteenth century, Afghanistan was seen as part of Central Asia by actors both in India and Britain. The second and more problematic term, which will appear at various places throughout this thesis, is *tribe*. I will use this term based on its frequency in primary sources and scholarly literature. It was employed in Britain's first encounter with the various peoples who lived in Afghanistan. According to Hopkins, the British attempted to compare Afghan society to the Scottish highlands. However, "more profoundly problematic than the Scottish comparison is the tribal motif employed by Elphinstone which found favour in the late-Enlightenment intellectual world he inhabited. Rather than conjuring images of the cruel and racially inferior native that predominated the late nineteenth-century world, tribe continued to resonate with Rousseau's image of the noble savage. Free of the late nineteenth-century racialization of tribe, its use here was not an explicitly negative or pejorative labeling."⁵¹ Afghanistan was seen as a politically fractured space. Therefore, imperial officials sought to capture the division that existed between the different communities and groups in the territory. In line with past colonial and intellectual experience, the category of tribe was used to describe the social and political organization of the area. Of course, this term took on additional meanings in later decades of the age of empire. I use tribe and Central Asia in my thesis to show how the British imagined and understood the peoples and lands on their northwest Indian frontier. Historians must apply these terms carefully and readers must keep in mind the distinct meanings of these terms in the period under study and their changing meaning over time.

⁵⁰ Michael Bonine, Abbas Amanat, and Michael Ezekiel Gasper, eds. *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁵¹ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 20.

2. CONJURING THE RUSSIAN MENACE: JUSTIFYING ACTION TO THE METROPOLITAN AUDIENCE

The object was to awaken and direct public attention of this country to the dangerously ambitious projects of Russia, and the alarming position she even then occupied in the East in regards to the empire of Great Britain in India, and her general interest in Central Asia; and the proof both of the correctness of its reasoning and the truth of its predictions may be found complete in the events...to whatever quarter we look, whether in Europe or in Asia, the influence and the power of Russia is seen upon the increase

John McNeill, 1838

2.1 Introduction

For securitization to take place, the *empowering audience* must accept the *securitizing move* of the *securitizing actor*.⁵² Determining the *empowering audience*, therefore, is vital to analyzing the actions of *securitizing actors*. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, London began to exercise increasingly more control over the territorial expansion of the East India Company.⁵³ According to M.E. Yapp, “the British view of India, as expressed in Press and Parliament, was an important constraint upon British Indian policy, or at least upon the ways in which policies could be discussed, arguments about the defence of India had to be phrased in a manner which would not leave room for critics to declare India to be a burden upon Britain.”⁵⁴ Indian officials were unable to act independently of metropolitan approval. In order

⁵² Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 9.

⁵³ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 245.

⁵⁴ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 3.

to acquire this approval, the Indian government had to frame their arguments and justify their actions in a language that would be understood and accepted in London. Yapp goes on to argue that “Britons in London forbade expansion except under certain conditions. One of these conditions was always a threat from France...after 1815 the French threat dwindled, to be eventually replaced by that from Russia.”⁵⁵ A menacing external threat, apparently posed by Russian expansion, served to unify the beliefs and actions of officials in London and Calcutta.⁵⁶ This chapter will argue that the Indian government (*securitizing actor*) conjured the spectre of a Russian threat (*referent subject*) against British India (*referent object*) in order to justify the invasion of Afghanistan (*policy*) to the Cabinet (*empowering audience*), the executive committee so to speak, of the British imperial government.

On May 22, 1838, the Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, alerted the Secret Committee of the East India Company about his intentions towards Afghanistan. In this document, Auckland made several crucial arguments that served to justify the coming invasion. These arguments included the essential characteristics of Asian diplomacy, the fractured nature of Afghanistan, the critical threat posed by Russian expansion and influence, the peril of internal turmoil, and the British capability to successfully counter these concerns through direct action. These arguments were informed and strengthened by prior statements made by *functional actors*.⁵⁷ The following sections of this chapter will analyze each of these arguments, and track their development prior to Auckland’s memorandum. The prior existence of these arguments

⁵⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁷ *Functional actors* “affect the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security,” See Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 36.

gave the Indian government additional credibility when they were finally used to justify invasion.

The restrictions imposed by technology in the early nineteenth century, made the May 22, 1838 document the main *securitizing move*. According to Daniel Headrick, “up to the 1830s, when an Englishman corresponded with someone in India, his letter, carried around Africa on an East Indiaman, took five to eight months to reach its destination.”⁵⁸ The glacial pace of communication meant that officials, politicians, and journalists in the metropole debated Indian policies months after they were initially proposed. Technological limitation made the May 22, 1838 document extremely influential. It arrived in London early enough to influence debate in the Cabinet. The information contained in this memorandum ensured that “by the end of August 1838 the broad outline of Auckland’s strategy were known and approved in London. Between the end of August and the Cabinet meeting on October 6 to 7 opinion in London hardened in favour of Auckland’s scheme.”⁵⁹ Thus the Cabinet had approved the invasion of Afghanistan prior to Auckland’s “Simla Manifesto” which was delivered on October 1, 1838. By the time Parliament convened in 1839 and began questioning Auckland’s reasoning, the Army of the Indus had already passed through the Bolan Pass on their way to Kabul. We will now turn our attention to the Auckland’s primary arguments.

2.2 The Nature of Asian Diplomacy

The conventional belief that Asian diplomacy was mired in fraud and duplicity greatly shaped the expectations and actions of the Indian government. Imperial officials developed and

⁵⁸ Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 130.

⁵⁹ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 281.

maintained a “body of theory and practice” about Asia and Islam.⁶⁰ These theories suggested that “Orientals,” including Persians and Afghans, were the supposed opposites of Europeans.⁶¹ If diplomacy among Europeans was based upon mutual recognition and shared rules of conduct and diplomacy between Europeans and Asians lacked these guidelines, then it had to be assumed that Asians could not be trusted with affairs of state. Indeed Asian rulers and their agents were thought to employ “corruption, perjury, forgery, to compass their ends.”⁶² This negative assessment of Asian rulers was a recurrent theme in imperial writing and greatly shaped policy.

The essentially perverse character of Asian diplomacy in British eyes precluded the establishment of a mutual understanding and benefit between the Indian government and Dost Mohammad Khan. Auckland exploited the conventional reputation of Asian leaders in his May 22, 1838 correspondence. He informed the Secret Committee that “Captain Burnes has now been desired to retire from Cabool as soon as there is reasonable certainty to the faith of the expedition against Herat, because it is felt that, under the best circumstances, any professions which Dost Mohammad Khan might make of submission to our wishes would be only hollow and insincere.”⁶³ Auckland made it clear that Dost Mohammad Khan was not to be trusted, and therefore, action was necessary. Initially, the Indian government had pursued commercial and diplomatic relations with Kabul. This mission failed, however, when Dost Mohammad Khan continued to seek British support against Ranjit Singh in Peshawar. The initial dispatch of the mission created the impression that the Indian government was strictly pursuing trade in Central Asia. However, Dost Mohammad Khan’s commitment to Afghan priorities caused the British to question wheth-

⁶⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 70-73.

⁶² Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006), 322.

⁶³ Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

er he would adhere to an asymmetric treaty. The Indian government suggested that Dost Mohammad would continue to pursue the control of Peshawar, and that this desire made his commitment suspect. Auckland's argument that Afghans were treacherous allies was informed by the writings of previous officials.

The supposed duplicity of Asians was a recurrent theme in official imperial writing. In 1813, John Macdonald Kinneir wrote his foundational text on Central Asia, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*. This work heavily influenced the beliefs and actions of future imperial officials by explaining the current situation in Central Asia and suggesting the essential characteristics of Asians. Kinneir claimed the right to speak with authority based upon his vast experience and wide travels in Asia. He had served in the Madras native infantry and "was attached to Sir John Malcolm's mission in Persia in 1808-9, during part of which time he was supernumerary agent at Bushehr, and made numerous journeys in Persia."⁶⁴ His service in India and Central Asia provided him with firsthand knowledge of his subject. This expertise gave him the authority to address a metropolitan audience about Asia. *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* provided readers with what was believed to be the objective reality of Central Asia.

The Asian character was a primary topic in Kinneir's work. For example, "the Persians are totally devoid of many estimable qualities, and profoundly versed in all the arts of deceit and hypocrisy. They are haughty to their inferiors, obsequious to their superiors, cruel, vindictive, treacherous and avaricious, without faith, friendship, gratitude, or honour."⁶⁵ He goes on to write that "avarice is the leading feature in the Persian character, and at the shrine of this detesta-

⁶⁴ H.M. Chichester, "Kinneir, Sir John Macdonald Kinneir (1782-1830), rev. James Falkner, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15637>, accessed 23 Sept 2013].

⁶⁵ John Macdonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* (London: John Murray, 1813), 22.

ble vice, every feeling of friendship and honour is sacrificed without a blush.”⁶⁶ Together, these statements paint a damning image of the Persian character. He contends that Persians, and Afghans, are inherently perfidious. Unlike Europeans, they will readily break an alliance or sabotage a friendship in order to pursue their own personal ambitions. However, Kinneir does not suggest that these traits are limited to a specific individual or leader. Rather, he suggests that they apply to every Persian. This essential truth implies that the Afghan leaders encountered by Auckland were the same as the Persians experienced by Kinneir. According to both of these officials, Asian leaders were not to be trusted.⁶⁷ The belief that Asians were essentially duplicitous provided legitimacy to Auckland’s argument.

2.3 The Anarchic Neighbor

The perceived state of anarchy in Afghanistan produced anxiety in the minds of imperial officials. According to B.D. Hopkins, by 1818 “the often-violent competition for the Afghan throne turned into a civil war between competing Durrani tribes. Although the civil war effectively reached a stalemate by 1823, the British continued to view the complicated in-fighting of Afghan *sardārs* as little more than anarchy.”⁶⁸ Due to the political turmoil in Afghanistan, the British believed the territory to be extremely volatile and threatening. This initial representation of Afghanistan as anarchic played an integral role in shaping British policy. The understanding

⁶⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁷ While Auckland employed this rule in his dealings with Dost Mohammad; he seemed perfectly willing to overlook the avarice of Asian leaders when entering into a binding and permanent defensive treaty with Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja.

⁶⁸ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 4.

of the Afghan political environment held by imperial officials categorically shaped their policies.⁶⁹ These initial assumptions were apparent in Auckland's justification.

Afghanistan's fractured political environment was construed as a direct threat to British India. The most concerning aspect of this disunity was its potential to create a power vacuum in Central Asia. It was feared that this void might be immediately filled by Russian influence. Auckland expresses these concerns in his memorandum. He reports that "the distracted condition of Affghanistan, from the open and acrimonious contests between the Sikhs and the Chief of Cabool on the one side, and between the Rulers of Candahar and Herat on the other, and from the total absence of any feeling of harmony and mutual confidence among different branches of the Barukzye family, had been the immediate cause of proffers of submission to Tehran, and to the invitation of Persian and Russian influence in the country."⁷⁰ Afghanistan was consumed by a multitude of intergroup competitions. It was argued that Dost Mohammad Khan did not possess the authority to control even his family, let alone the entirety of Afghanistan. He was constantly engaged in conflicts with his brothers in Kandahar and Ranjit Singh in Peshawar. It was believed that these rivalries would compel individual actors to pursue support from foreign powers. It was feared that these rulers would court Russia as a way to achieve their personal aspirations, and that Russia would exploit this disunion to advance their march on British India. Auckland was not the first official to worry over the possible regional consequences of local struggles in Afghanistan.

Central Asia and Afghanistan were consistently presented as being engulfed by a state of chaos and disunity. One of the first authors to express this turmoil was Jon Macdonald Kinneir.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

In his commentary on Persia, he stated that “these boundaries comprehend many great provinces and several kingdoms, which I shall hereafter endeavor to describe, although the dominion of the present King does not extend over many of these countries.”⁷¹ In the first page of Kinneir’s work, he exposes metropolitan audiences to the political disorder of Central Asia. This argument colored both his work and subsequent authors’ works. Britons were presented with a space that was not under the control of an individual sovereign. Without a central power, this space was open to a horde of actors who would pursue their own conflicting political interests. Auckland clearly subscribed to this sense of a volatile geopolitical environment. He suggests that many Asian rulers were vying for supremacy in Afghanistan and Central Asia. It is feared that Russia will exploit these competitions for its own gain. The turmoil of Central Asia as a region was especially prevalent in Afghanistan.

While Kinneir presented Central Asia as a chaotic region, subsequent writers focused their readers’ attention on Afghanistan. Sixteen years after Kinneir published his work, Lieutenant Colonel George de Lacy Evans wrote *On the Practicality of an Invasion of British India: And the Commercial and Financial Prospects and Resources of the Empire*. Evans argued that Russian expansion posed an imminent threat to British India. Evans constantly quoted “often highly selectively, the evidence and opinions of both British and Russian travelers to prove the feasibility of a Russian thrust against India.”⁷² Central to Evans’s argument was the instability and fragility of Central Asian polities. These areas would pose little or no challenge for an advancing Russian force. He also argued that “Caubul has been invariably regarded as the key of India.”⁷³ Therefore, whichever power controlled Kabul would control India. A strong Kabul was critical

⁷¹ Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, 1.

⁷² Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 116.

⁷³ George de Lacy Evans, *On the Practicality of an Invasion of British India: And the Commercial and Financial Prospects and Resources of the Empire* (London: J.M. Richardson, 1829), 98.

for the security of British India. Evans went on to explain that the present state of Kabul has been extremely tumultuous. He explains that “in a political sense, the kingdom of Caubul, as it is called, is in a state of decomposition...for nearly thirty years a species of anarchy has reigned.”⁷⁴ The state of Afghanistan is central to Evans’s argument. He is committed to demonstrating the existential threat posed by Russia to India, and he directly connects the anarchic state of Afghanistan to his fears about Russia. A weak and disorganized Afghanistan will serve as a stepping stone for the Russian advance into India. Auckland used this argument again a decade later in his May 22, 1838 memorandum. A fractured Afghanistan served as “an invitation” for Russian expansion.

2.4 The Advancing Russian Menace

The Russian menace was easily understood by a metropolitan audience, which lubricated the Indian government’s *securitizing move*. Russia could be forcefully presented as the *referent subject* due to the various events and utterances that had predated Auckland’s memorandum. According to Balzacq, “the success of securitization is contingent upon a perceptive environment. Therefore, the positive outcome of securitization, whether it is strong or weak, lies with the securitizing actor’s choice of determining the appropriate times within which the recognition, including the integration of the ‘imprinting’ object – a threat – by the masses is facilitated.”⁷⁵ The success of Auckland’s *securitizing move* was dependent on the context that informed it. For the *securitizing move* to be successful, and garner the desired response from the *empowering audience*, it had to exploit *heuristic artefacts* that were already familiar in the metropole. After

⁷⁴ Ibid., 63.

⁷⁵ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 13.

1815, Russia represented the most ominous threat in London.⁷⁶ This sense of peril was critical in Auckland's attempt to justify the use of military force.

The need to counter Russian influence in Central Asia served as Auckland's primary rationale for military actions. He both begins and concludes his May 22, 1838 memorandum with words about this looming threat. The opening of his memorandum draws the audience's attention to the current situation in Afghanistan. He states that he has "the honour to submit herewith copies of despatches from Captain Burnes on political Employ in Cabool, from which your Honourable Committee will perceive that the Increase of Russian and Persian Influence in Affghanistan, and the Impression of the certain Fall of Herat to the Persian Army, have induced Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan to avow and to insist upon Pretensions for the Cession to him, by Maharajah Runjeet Sing, of the Peshawur territory, and to take other Steps which are tantamount to the Rejection of the Friendship and good Offices of the British Government; and have in consequence led to the Retirement of Captain Burnes from the Territories of Cabool."⁷⁷ While the Persian Army is carrying out the siege of Herat, Auckland makes it clear that Russian influence is the primary concern. The primary threat posed by the fall of Herat is the expansion of Russian influence into the western part of Afghanistan. Auckland also redirects the Committee's attention from the fortress of Herat to Dost Mohammad Khan's court in Kabul. Russian influence has empowered the Amir to make insupportable demands on the British and has destroyed any possibility of a successful outcome to negotiations with him. Auckland concludes this memorandum by begging "leave to draw the attention of your Committee to the unequivocal demonstrations therein noted, of the extent to which Russia is carrying her system of interference on the very

⁷⁶ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 14.

⁷⁷ Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

threshold of the British Indian possessions.”⁷⁸ Although Auckland spends a portion of this memorandum addressing the status of various rulers and polities of Central Asia, he is mainly concerned with Russia. By naming Russia as the primary adversary in the region and aiming his challenge at Russian power, Auckland is linking his appreciation of the situation and his proposed operations to the wider concerns of British strategy and foreign policy.

The anxiety felt in London about Russia was due to the strategic environment in Europe, compounded by Russophobic propaganda. Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815 altered the balance of power in Europe. Propagandists in London began arguing that Russia was destined to replace France as the dominant force in Europe and Asia. One of the first authors to construct this threat was General Robert Wilson. In *A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia: In the Year 1817*, Wilson exposes his reader to what he envisions as Russia’s future hegemony. He asserts that when

Alexander came to the throne *thirty-six millions* of people acknowledged his authority; but at this day, by increase and acquisition, there cannot be less than *forty-two millions* at the LOWEST calculation; and not of Asiatic houseless hordes, wandering in deserts, but chiefly of Europeans situated in territories, whose military and political value to Russia does not merely consist in an augmentation of her revenue and her number of souls, but as will be shown hereafter, in CONTRACTING her line of defence, and at the same time affording her powers to advance to positions, that must, if properly occupied, secure the *command* of Europe and of Asia!⁷⁹

Three aspects of Wilson’s argument are especially illuminating. First, he demonstrates that Russia’s current pursuit of power is not an isolated event, but rather, a historic theme. This theme is evident by Alexander’s appearance. Russia has been figuratively, and literally, marching towards universal hegemony. Second, Wilson draws upon the demographic power of Russia. One

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹ Robert Wilson, *A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia: In the Year 1817* (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1817), 128.

of Britain's perceived limitations in these years was its relatively small population.⁸⁰ By possessing a population of at least "forty-two million peoples," Russia presented an especially threatening force. Russia's strength appeared to match Britain's weakness. Finally, Wilson connects the situation in Europe and Asia. Russian expansion in one continent would directly increase their power and capabilities in the other. If this was indeed the case, Russian influence in Afghanistan would advance Russian power in Europe.

In 1838, the year of Auckland's memorandum, the Russian spectre seemed especially sinister. Sir John McNeill, a British political envoy to Persia, focused his readers' attention not simply on Russia's predisposition towards expansion, but precisely on its imminent threat to the borderlands of Britain's Indian possessions. He proclaimed that

in short, we see Russian influence, instead of being limited to the line of the Arras, prevailing now, not at Herat alone, but at Caubul – nay, even to the banks of the Indus. Nor is the rapidity of this progress less alarming and astounding than its unerring certainty. Sixty-four years, that is, from 1772 till 1835-6, were required to advance the southern frontier of the Czars a distance of 700 miles. Within these last two years the Emperor Nicholas has advanced his influence, if not his troops, from the Arras to Caubul, a stride of more than 2000 miles. It signifies little to object that the Russian troops are not yet even at Herat: the time may not be ripe for the last decided step of military occupation; but it is fast approaching and if England remains as indifferent to the present and the future as she has been to the past, the consummation will speedily be witnessed.⁸¹

Several aspects of this comment seem to have shaped Auckland's actions. First, both Auckland and McNeill emphasize that Russian influence is being felt in *both* Herat and Kabul. It is feared, therefore, that Russia now controls the two main invasion routes into India. The control of both routes presents British strategists with significant challenge. Russia possesses the freedom to invade through whichever route is the weakest in terms of British defences. Next, the monstrous scope of Russian expansion is presented, especially within the last two years. Russia's southern

⁸⁰ Colley, *Captives*, 6.

⁸¹ John McNeill, *Progress and the Present Position of Russia in the East* (London: John Murray, 1838), ix.

frontier is creeping daily towards India. He argues that Russia's true objectives are "found complete in the events."⁸² As long as the British do nothing, the Russians will continue to close on their frontier. This leads into McNeill's final argument. Here, he does not strictly report the "facts" of the situation, but rather, makes a call to arms. British complacency is presented as the main cause of Russia's rapid advance. It is suggested, however, that if the British act decisively, they may yet be able to curb the spread of Russian influence in Central Asia. McNeill's argument was presented just before Auckland's decision. Metropolitan audiences read about the dire situation and the need for action, just as it was being contemplated.

2.5 The Russian Presence on the Indian Frontier

The defence of British India was not independent of European and global rivalries. India's role in the accrual of British power turned it into a potential battlefield, where European rivals could contest British power. Edward Ingram explains that "as soon as Great Britain as great power was transformed by the conquest of India into a dual monarchy, her European enemies could give up the difficult task of invading the British Isles for the simpler task of creating a sphere of influence in the Middle East. The danger feared by the British was not invasion but rebellion and bankruptcy"⁸³ The defence of India and the balance of power in Europe were intimately connected. In order for Britain to maintain its prestige in Europe, it had to maintain its control of India and the revenue it produced. European rivals could decrease British revenue by

⁸² Ibid., i.

⁸³ Edward Ingram, *In Defence of British India: Great Britain and the Middle East, 1775-1842* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), 9.

inciting local revolts and rebellions.⁸⁴ The arrival of a Russian force on the frontier of India might cause these revolts and thereby undermine British rule.

Auckland reported his concern about the potential for local resistance if Russia reached the Indian frontier. Moreover, he worries that the Persian siege of Herat will turn this nightmare into a reality. He states that “the extraordinary excitement which has been produced in the public mind, as well in the Punjaub and Affghanistan, in consequence of the approach of the Persian power, is also a signal to us of the mischief which might arise, were the power to acquire a settled authority or influence over all the Affghan countries.”⁸⁵ The Indian response to the Persian siege of Herat serves as a harbinger of the unrest that will result from foreign intrigue in Afghanistan. Auckland suggests that the Persian siege, reinforced by Russian influence, were responsible for Dost Mohammad Khan’s rejection of British offers of friendship and commerce. The strife caused by foreign influence is no longer limited to the speculations of *functional actors*. It is now observable throughout Afghanistan. Foreign intrigue had already caused significant turmoil, even before the Russian and Persian forces had successfully subdued Herat or gained control of Afghan territory. If these powers could establish control in Afghanistan, they would be able to spawn discontent across the Indus. Indian officials were continually concerned about an external actor inciting or inspiring native rebellion.

Internal turmoil was a primary concern throughout the British experience in India. It was emphatically expressed by the “Savior of Empire,” Warren Hastings. He explained that “*the country contains at least six millions of inhabitants, every adult male of whom is provided with arms, and habituated to the use of them,* THE FORCE, HOWEVER, IRREGULAR, CAPABLE

⁸⁴ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 11.

⁸⁵ Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

TO BE THENCE COLLECTED IN THE REAR OF THE ARMY WITH WHICH WE WERE MEETING THE INVADER ON THE FRONTIER, WAS A SUBJECT NOT TO BE REVOLTED WITHOUT ANXIETY.”⁸⁶ Hastings suggests that internal turmoil is especially threatening when the British are already engaged in a conflict with an external enemy. He presents local resistance as an irregular rabble. This rabble would be easily defeated if the British were able to concentrate their forces against the revolt. If the British were engaged in a conflict with a European enemy, however, this irregular force would be capable of attacking the British rear, and making it exceedingly difficult to defeat the European rival or the native revolt. Internal revolt and external conflict are additive. If they erupt together, the British will face a horror that might undermine the value of Britain in India.

Evans expanded upon Hastings argument and presented Russia as the primary external force that might produce internal turmoil. Evans argues that “Russia may not shortly acquire a degree of intercourse with India that will enable her – first, to disturb and disaffect the public mind of that country towards us whereby India must soon become either untenable to us, or, from the excess of expenditure over receipts, resulting from this state of things, unworthy of further retention.”⁸⁷ He makes several arguments that are especially important to Auckland’s later *securitizing move*. First, he draws his readers’ attention to the Russian threat. Unlike Hastings, the external threat is no longer a faceless entity, but rather, the Russian Cossack. The siege of Herat and Vitkevich’s presence in Kabul might open the aforementioned intercourse between Russia and India. Next, Evans suggests that a Russian force crossing the Indus is not the primary concern. Rather, it is Russia’s presence on the frontier that will have crippling effects on Britain’s ability to control the subcontinent cheaply. The external threat will cause turmoil, which

⁸⁶ Evans, *On the Practicality of an Invasion of British India*, 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

will be exceedingly costly to subdue. This expense will make the continued control of India unjustifiable and will end the British presence in India. In order to maintain control, the Indian government must ensure that the Indians do not perceive Russia as a potential ally or Britain as a weak power.

British actors on the frontier and local informants corroborated this concern. One of the most important voices shaping the attitudes of Auckland was Mohan Lal Kashmiri. Lal was a “great traveler, brilliant diplomat, reputed author, the first Kashmiri to learn English and probably the first Indian to educate his daughter in England.”⁸⁸ He also served as Alexander Burnes’s linguist during his initial excursion through Central Asia and later in the First Anglo-Afghan War. Due to his position and talents, Lal had the ear of important British actors in India, including Auckland. As a native informant, he confirmed the British fear of Indian discontent. He explained that

the necessity so apparent for taking immediate steps to counteract the openly united intrigues and encroachments of the Russian ambassador and the Shah of Persia, which had most effectually made their way into Sindh and the interior of India. It is unnecessary for me to beg the readers to trace their way back in the histories of former times, and in the records and publications which are so numerous, and which will all bear a prompt witness that whenever any rumours of invasion from the west of the Indus have been afloat they have always excited very much the people of India.⁸⁹

The dangerous state of affairs in Afghanistan was now known to Indians. In order to maintain control, the British had to act immediately. Lal also contends that Indians had a historical memory of invasions and the reverberations of even fears or hopes of invasion on the stability of the country. Turmoil in India had always been tied to events across the Indus. Action had to be taken to suppress rumors in the bazaar and discourage any thought of revolt.

⁸⁸ Hari Ram Gupta, *Life and Work of Mohan Lal Kashmiri, 1812-1877* (Calcutta: Midland Press, 1943), ix.

⁸⁹ Mohan Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammad Khan of Kabul: With His Political Proceedings Towards the English, Russian, and Persian Governments, Including the Victory and Disasters of the British Army in Afghanistan*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 1: 361-362.

Russian influence and the urgency of measures to counteract were articulated to the metropolitan audience. McNeill asserts that the siege of Herat has pushed the Indian government to a point of no return. He also makes it clear that the metropole must accept the beliefs and actions of the man on the spot. He contends that

were she [Russia] established at Herat, the influence she would exert in India, even in times of peace, would be such as to render the government of that country much more delicate and difficult than it now is. Those who best know India, not merely the presidencies but the provinces, will comprehend the charge that would be effected in our position there, by the presence, within such a distance as to make a collision probably, of any power equal to our own. Rebellions would become more frequent and formidable. The revue would in many places be collected with difficulty, and in some the full amount would not be paid.⁹⁰

The Russian presence in Afghanistan would produce constant restlessness in India. Even if their forces did not press the offensive, their mere presence would have devastating results. It would increase the number of rebellions in the country and decrease the revenue being collected in the country. These concerns were being reported by British experts on India. According to Balzacq, “the expression of the power of words, in the sense relevant here, depends on the context and the power position of the agent that utters them.”⁹¹ The speaker and the specific strategic environment matter to the credibility of the *securitizing move*. The siege of Herat and the Russian mission to Kabul presented a strikingly threatening situation. In addition, as both McNeill and Balzacq make clear, the man on the spot is the primary actor capable of recognizing and describing the threat. Their supposed expertise makes their arguments seem credible and objective. In order to convince the Cabinet, Auckland utilizes the arguments of his men on the spot to legitimize his decision.

⁹⁰ McNeill, *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*, 127.

⁹¹ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 25.

2.6 The British Capability to Respond

While Russia may indeed have posed an existential threat to British India, more than just a threat was necessary for the success of the *securitizing move*. The British had to see themselves as capable of countering the Russian advance. In Auckland's correspondence to the Secret Committee, he included two additional documents. The second document provided was a letter between Deputy Secretary Henry Torrens and William Macnaghten, the Secretary to the Government of India from May 15, 1838. In this document, Torrens lays out the Indian government's position for negotiations with the Maharajah Ranjit Singh. He explains that the Governor-General "feels strong in Military Means, and that with an Army of 100,000 Men under European Officers in Bengal, and with 100,000 more whom he might call to his Aid from Madras and Bombay, he can with Ease repel every Aggression, and punish every Enemy."⁹² The Indian government suggests that its military forces are capable of countering any rival in the East, including Russia. While the Indian Army would eventually be victorious, the expenditure necessary to win the war would impede or even defeat the purpose of British dominance in India, the collection of tribute.⁹³ The Indian government's statement makes it clear that the armed forces have the ability to halt Russian expansion, but that immediate action is necessary to ensure the costs would not be crippling.

Immediately before the First Anglo-Afghan War, Russophobes argued that Britain possessed the capability to oppose Russian ascendancy. It was suggested, however, that if Russian thrusts were to be curbed, immediate and decisive action was imperative. McNeill directly engaged this subject in *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*. McNeill presented

⁹² Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

⁹³ Ingram, *In Defence of British India*, 156.

Russia as an emerging Eurasian power. While it represented a significant threat to British hegemony, McNeill suggested to his readers that it was not too late to arrest Russian expansion. He believed that “England may be assured that Russia dreads her. She does and will continue to advance, step by step, until patience is worn out, and indignation is roused. Then, and not till then, will Russia recede.”⁹⁴ While the Russians were accumulating the military power and reach to counter the British in Europe and Asia, they had not yet reached parity. Russia was still afraid of British arms and therefore would retreat if the British pursued a resolute course of action. If action was not taken, however, Britain and Russia would shortly possess comparable strength, or worse, Russia would surpass Britain. Decisive action had to be taken prior to the achievement by Russia of symmetrical power with Britain.

Successful securitization must convince the audience that immediate action is necessary to counter an existential threat.⁹⁵ McNeill suggests that unless immediate action was taken, Britain would lose the opportunity to react. He suggests that Russia is on the brink of surpassing Britain as the predominant power in Asia in 1838, and thus represents an existential threat to British India. With the siege of Herat and Vitkevich’s mission in Kabul, the

point in the progress of Russia, when resistance to her dangerous ambition becomes imperative, has surely been reached. The moment for firmness is language and decision in act has arrived; and let it not be forgotten that a neglect of such junctures – a constant sacrifice of opportunities in dealing with a powerful and encroaching adversary – must at length place us in a position where to struggle may be in vain, and we may awake from our lethargy too late for safety.⁹⁶

McNeill staunchly contends that immediate action must be taken. British India had come to a crossroads. If the British act, they can stop Russian enlargement. If they remain indecisive and passive, they will lose the opportunity to respond. With this inescapable choice in mind, Auck-

⁹⁴ McNeill, *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*, xiii.

⁹⁵ Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security*, 26.

⁹⁶ McNeill, *Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East*, xiv.

land alerts the Secret Committee that “the rapid March of Events may oblige me to act.”⁹⁷ The Indian government makes it clear that Russia now represents an immediate existential threat. Together, Auckland and McNeill make it clear that Britain can still curb Russian influence and entrench British power in India for the foreseeable future. In order to do this, however, action must be taken immediately before the opportunity is lost forever.

2.7 Conclusion: Silencing the Opposition

Auckland’s *securitizing move* was meant to convince the Cabinet that military action in Afghanistan was critical to preserving the security (and profitability) of British India. In the May 22, 1838 memorandum, Auckland informed the Cabinet that events in Afghanistan may force him to act prior to their approval. Auckland made the decision to invade Afghanistan prior to receiving the Cabinet’s blessing. However, he realized that London’s support was vital to legitimate the conflict and authorization for a permanent residence in Kabul. The Cabinet would unanimously approve Auckland’s strategy in October 1838.⁹⁸ Although the invasion of Afghanistan came before Parliament in February 1839, the British government’s tactics had stolen a march, literally and figuratively, on the opposition and little criticism was voiced initially in Parliament about this distant expedition into the interior of Central Asia.

The initial presentation of the invasion occurred in Parliament on February 5, 1839. Queen Victoria made a brief reference to the actions of the Indian government in her speech at the opening of the new session. Shortly after the introduction of these events, the Duke of Wellington rose and told the Lords that “it is impossible for me, or for any person ever so little ac-

⁹⁷ Lord Auckland to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company, 22 May 1838. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 40 (1839). Indian Papers Section 4.

⁹⁸ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 281.

quainted as many of your Lordships must be with this subject, to pretend to give any opinions upon the point; but as it is alluded to in the Speech from the Throne, and in the Address moved by the noble Earl, I conclude that her Majesty's Government will consider it their duty to give this House, and the other House of Parliament all the information in their power, in order to enable the public to form a judgment on these important transactions."⁹⁹ The Duke of Wellington, a member of the Conservative opposition,¹⁰⁰ decided to suspend his judgment until further information was received. Viscount Melbourne, the Whig Prime Minister, was agreeable to Wellington's call for information before any decisions were made. He stated that "with reference to the great affairs of the Oriental empire, to all the important measures which are being taken in the East, I trust the House will adopt the expectation of the noble Duke, and suspend judgment on these matters till we have full information and knowledge of all the various circumstances, and of the principles on which the operations have been conducted. Everybody knows the magnitude of the question, the danger, the difficulty, and delicacy of its position, and I do hope, with the noble Duke, that the House will not proceed to consider the question till it is in possession of full information on the subject, and that then it will be debated with the utmost calmness and impartiality."¹⁰¹ Melbourne implored Parliament to postpone making a decision on the invasion of Afghanistan until they were fully informed on the events that brought about the military movement. The debate ultimately ended with Parliament requesting papers prior to making a decision.

The initial debate on the invasion of Afghanistan took place at the beginning of February 1839, but Parliament had only received Auckland's "Simla Manifesto" and several Asian treaties

⁹⁹ Duke of Wellington, 5 February 1839.

¹⁰⁰ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 192.

¹⁰¹ Viscount Melbourne, 5 February 1839.

by the middle of March. This caused the Earl of Aberdeen to move for the presentation of papers on Afghanistan. He engaged Melbourne, informing him that Parliament

could only look to the manifest of the Governor-general, which he had sent forth to the world, and which had been communicated to that House; and what led him to make any observation upon it was, that he wished the noble Viscount to understand that much explanation would be required before he could accept that declaration, which was, of course, partial, as a justification of the policy which had been adopted; and he must say, that judging by that exposition alone, he had never seen a document which require more explanation, or which appeared so much to justify the worst imputations that had ever been cast on our Eastern policy. It was to be considered as a favourable statement, issued by the Governor-general to justify his future course; and no man could say, unless it were subsequently explained, this course was not as rash and impolitic, as it was ill-considered, oppressive, and unjust. It was possible, however, that his opinion might be modified by what might be produced hereafter. He would move, in the first instance, for copies of any correspondence which had passed with the court of Caubul and the rulers of Affghanistan.¹⁰²

Aberdeen makes several important points. First, he makes it clear that Parliament had received limited information in regards to British relations with Afghanistan prior to the invasion. Although a month and a half had passed since the initial notification, Parliament still did not possess sufficient information to pass judgment on the event. Second, he argues that the war appeared to be unjust and impolitic in light of the little information contained in the “Simla Manifesto”. The manifesto did not include a full justification of the war. Parliament could not determine whether the Indian government’s actions were acceptable. Third, he suggests that his opinion might be changed if the Government provided additional information. In reply, Melbourne requested several additional days to compile the requested information. The papers were finally ordered on March 27, 1839.

The delay in providing information meant that parliamentary critics of the government did not challenge the war. By the time the papers were finally ordered, the Army of the Indus

¹⁰² Earl of Aberdeen, 19 March 1839

had already reached Quetta and was less than a month away from securing Kandahar. This obstruction meant that by the time Parliament had the necessary information to debate the invasion, it was far too late to halt the operations of the Indian Army. Even if Parliament had acted immediately upon receipt of these papers, it would have been months before any countermanding order could have reached India. In fact, Shah Shuja entered Kabul and reclaimed his throne on August 7, 1839. Parliament's "stop order" would have reached India, at the earliest, a month too late.

Apart from the delay, the documents presented to Parliament only reinforced the Government case. According to Yapp, "the papers were cleverly chosen so as to demonstrate the nature of the activities of Russian agents. They were also edited with a view to strengthening the case against Dost Mohammad by making him seem more obdurate than was the case."¹⁰³ The Government selected and edited documents very deliberately to construct a specific argument. In the papers provided to Parliament, Russia was presented as an existential threat, and Dost Mohammad Khan was portrayed as an irrational religious fanatic bent on his own aspirations. Even if papers had been supplied to Parliament in a timely fashion, the information contained in the papers was, to say the least, favorable to the government. The intelligence in the papers pointed in only one direction, the need to counter a Russian threat in Afghanistan.

Ultimately the Opposition did not challenge the Government on Afghanistan. Yapp suggests that this decision was because "the Central Asian question was poor tactical territory for an attack on the Government. Probably the Tories were wise to avoid a debate on Central Asia; the later military successes in Afghanistan, although greeted by Melbourne with contemptuous derision, were treated as triumphs. The question was not raised in Parliament again until after the

¹⁰³ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 301.

disasters in 1842.”¹⁰⁴ By exploiting the delays inherent in parliamentary procedure, the technological limitations of worldwide communication in the 1830s, and the short-term military successes of the Army of the Indus, the Government was able to outmaneuver the Opposition. By gaining the support of the British imperial government in London, Auckland acquired the ability to act expeditiously in Afghanistan. The metropolitan audience was convinced that the Army of the Indus had been deployed to counter an imminent Russian threat. Yet the Indian government’s real concern was internal unrest and revolt predicated on mere rumor of a Russian advance. The utilization of military force in Afghanistan was meant to demonstrate British power and prestige to an Indian audience and put down any danger of Indian trouble rather than quiet Afghan turbulence or oppose any chance of Russian invasion.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 301.

3. COUNTERING THE INTERNAL THREAT: THE TACTICAL PEDAGOGY OF THE AFGHAN INVASION

The Governor General is proud to express the acknowledgements of the Government to the Army of the Indus, which alike by its valor, its discipline, and cheerfulness under hardships and privations, and its conciliatory conduct to the inhabitants of the countries through which it passed, has earned respect for the British name, and has confirmed in central Asia a just impression of British energy and resources. A march of extraordinary length, through difficult and untried countries, has been within a few months successfully accomplished; and in the capture of the one stronghold where resistance was attempted, a trophy of victory has been won, which will add a fresh lustre to the reputation of the armies of India.

General Orders, Commander of the Forces, 1839

3.1 Introduction

Securitization is a social process, and therefore it, is structured by the power relationship between *securitizing actors* and *empowering audiences*. According to Thierry Balzacq, “the key argument is that both successful and failed securitizations, are best captured by disaggregating the audience, as different audiences are receptive to different kinds of arguments, and have distinct types of power.”¹⁰⁵ For *securitizing actors* to successfully persuade the *empowering audience*, they must speak through an easily accessible language. Due to the perceived differences between cultures and audiences, *securitizing actors* must employ different means of persuasion for different groups. These differences are especially apparent when analyzing the practices and

¹⁰⁵ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 7.

policies of empires. According to Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, “the concept of empire presumes that different people within the polity will be governed differently.”¹⁰⁶ In order to manage vast territories and a variety of peoples, empires pursued specific policies, or repertoires of power, that they believed would best adhere to the specific political and cultural context of each locale.¹⁰⁷ After the American Revolution, “to many in England, it appeared as if holding the remaining empire together would depend less on appeal to a common ‘Britishness’ and more on the direct exercise of power over people regarded as backwards or elites seen as tyrannical. But British ability to carry off their harsher control was still constrained by the need to give local elites a stake in the imperial enterprise.”¹⁰⁸ For the British to manage their imperial possessions in Asia, they had to develop and implement policies that forced submission, and yet, retained the support of local rulers.¹⁰⁹ Imperial officials utilized a multitude of practices to sustain their control in India.

By invading Sindh and Afghanistan, the Indian government was able to exhibit their military prowess; while concurrently maintaining their relationships with local intermediaries. In this chapter, I argue that the military tactics (*securitizing move*) employed by the Indian government and Army of the Indus (*securitizing actor*) served as a set of intersubjective practices, which were meant to showcase British power and validate British prestige in the region. These practices were meant to force local rulers (*empowering audience*) to accept their subjugation and deliver their collaboration (*policy*). Through this show of force, the Indian government (*referent subject*) cast themselves as an existential threat to local rulers and their ability to maintain their rule (*referent object*) if they failed to recognize British dominance. Specifically, I will analyze

¹⁰⁶ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁰⁹ James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 24.

the submission of Sindh, the capture of the fortress at Ghazni, the symbolic defeat of Islam, and the practical and discursive role of military parades and gun salutes. The *dispositif*¹¹⁰ of these military practices served to present a clear and explicit message to local rulers.

3.2 How to Govern Asia

British power in India was dependent upon the application of coercive techniques. In order to clearly communicate a lesson, imperial officials had to speak in a language that was easily understood by a native audience. According to Balzacq, “effective persuasion requires that a speaker’s argument employs terms that resonate with the hearer’s language.”¹¹¹ If a speaker does not employ a language known to the hearer, miscommunication and misunderstanding is bound to take place. A speaker must, therefore, determine which language and arguments will be most accessible by their audience. The Indian government believed that the language of military might and coercive force was the most applicable language when communicating with native rulers and peoples.

The use of force to communicate a message was seen as fundamental to control in Asia. Imperial officials believed that Asian peoples had always been ruled and taught through fear, and that it was the only successful means of communication. This understanding was expressed in the writing of several key *functional actors*. According to George de Lacy Evans, “Asiatics have, in all ages, been familiar with conquest, and with the undistinguished display of overt authority, wherever power exists; and the abstinence from it, or what has been termed the ‘non-

¹¹⁰ “Assumption 3: The Dispositif and the Structuring Force of Practices. *Securitization occurs in a field of struggles. It thus consists of practices which instantiate intersubjective understandings and which are framed by tools and the habitus inherited from different social fields. The dispositif connects different practices,*” See Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 15.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

interference plan,' they have constantly proven incapable of appreciating."¹¹² Evans is making several important arguments that shaped future imperial tactics. First, he argues that the use of force has been the primary tool of maintaining control throughout Asian history. Due to the supposed nature of Asians, they can and must be governed through the use of overt power. Second, he argues that any other technique of governance would be misunderstood. Since force has constantly been used, less oppressive techniques would be unrecognizable to an Asian audience. In order to communicate unambiguously with Asian subjects and successfully govern Asian polities, it was vital to use the established repertoires of power.

The importance and appropriateness of force was a recurring argument made by individuals who directly shaped the positions and policies of the East India Company. Due to his travels and immense experience, Alexander Burnes was seen as an expert on Central Asia and its peoples. During his initial trek to Kabul and Bukhara, Burnes expressed his beliefs about proper governance in these territories. While traveling through Sindh, Burnes reported the rapacity and brutal power exercised by its Amirs. He argues however, that "we might look upon Sindh and her people in a different light: but these rulers who seized it by the sword must be excused for so maintaining it. Where the principles of honour are not understood (as has ever been too much the case in Asiatic governments), men must be ruled by fear; and it is only as the subject gets liberal and civilized, that he can appreciate the advantages of free institutions, and deserves a share in the government of his country."¹¹³ Like Evans, Burnes suggests that violent force has been integral to the maintenance of power throughout Asian history. The Amirs of Sindh have applied cruel techniques by necessity. The general populace of Central Asia is unable to comprehend more civilized forms of government, and therefore, must be ruled through undisguised force.

¹¹² Evans, *On the Practicality of an Invasion of British India*, 98.

¹¹³ Alexander Burnes, *Travels Into Bokhara* (London: John Murray, 1834), 235.

Since in his view Asians are not civilized, or at least not yet, successful governance requires constant violent enforcement. Although a constitutional and “liberal” style of government was appropriate in the metropole, a similar system would be ineffective in controlling India. In order to rule, the Indian government had to clearly demonstrate their military capabilities and their political will to use them.

3.3 The Indian Army and British Prestige

The sheer magnitude of the territorial and demographic scope of India made it extraordinarily valuable, yet difficult to control. Edward Ingram explains that “the Indian Empire was the most valuable piece of property owned by the British. The Indian Army was meant to keep it in order, but as the effectiveness of the army depended upon the prestige of the British, it was a symbol rather an instrument of power.”¹¹⁴ Ingram goes on to argue that “the Great Game was planned as an offensive which might help the British to avoid the price of their military weakness. The British were not well equipped in the early nineteenth century to repulse an invasion of India, brush off a feint at invasion, or put down a rebellion.”¹¹⁵ Together, these statements make several arguments that are critical to understanding British policy in India. First, Ingram makes it clear that India, especially after the American Revolution, had become a vital part of the British Empire. It offered a giant market for British goods, mass stores of wealth and resources, and extensive untapped potential. Therefore, maintaining control of this possession was of strategic importance. Second, he challenges the notion that Britain was already the dominant European and global power by the late eighteenth century. He suggests that, especially at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British were relatively weak. Third, he argues that British

¹¹⁴ Ingram, *In Defence of British India*, 10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

prestige and the perceived capabilities of the Indian Army were more important than their actual ability to project, deploy, and execute military force. The representation of unmatched strength was meant to manage foreign and local rivals without actually engaging in combat. Military prestige was critical to British control in India.

British prestige was meant to control local rulers and counter the perceived internal threat of turmoil and rebellion. The Indian government hoped that fear of the unvanquished capability of their Army, and the corollary of inevitable defeat for any challenger would deter local intrigue. M.E. Yapp contends that the greatest weapon the Indian government had against internal turmoil was prestige. “If Indian enemies of British power believed that revolt was foredoomed to failure they would be less inclined to make the attempt. Accordingly, it was vital that the Raj should never be defied and never beaten but should always present an impression of confident, overbearing power.”¹¹⁶ The Indian government had to present an image of a dominant and unrivaled force in South Asia. However, this was especially challenging due to British demographic weakness and the consequent need to maintain the support of local intermediaries. Military spectacle was a potential strategy for demonstrating British power under these constraints. According to Scott Myerly, “for any state struggling to maintain control and authority in situations where its forces are insufficient for the task, as was the case in Great Britain, the manipulation of visual images is especially significant in the exercise of power.”¹¹⁷ Military spectacle was such an effective tool for subduing turmoil due to its ability to intimidate rebels and rivals.¹¹⁸ In order to assert British power and prestige, the Indian government sought the opportunity to perform on

¹¹⁶ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Scott Myerly, *British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic War through the Crimea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 10.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

the Asian stage. This desire was increasingly pressing since Britain was not the only European power in Asia.

Immediately preceding the invasion of Afghanistan, the Indian government believed that their prestige was waning in relation to Russia. It was feared that if Russia became the predominant power in Central Asia, native rulers and peoples would rise up against their British overlords. This fear was clearly expressed by Mohan Lal:

there was no doubt that the Russian name and influence was materially injurious to British interests even as far as to the eastern side of the Indus. The rumours of the power and bravery of the Russians, exaggerated by distance and talked of in Oriental style as it passed from one person to another, had given ample reason for restlessness in the minds of the discontented chiefs of India. This was indeed not limited to Mahomedans only, but extended to the Rajput chiefs also of that country and every one of them was looking forward with anxiety for the expected reverses of the English. Tired of tranquility, and aspiring and longing for that pomp which all Asiatics enjoy during public confusion, they were whispering their wishes and preparing themselves to be ready at a moment's call, and to throw off the mask of quiet discontent against the rule of the British government.¹¹⁹

There were several main causes of British anxiety. First, he contends that British and Russian prestige were relational. As Russian influence in Central Asia rose, it directly reduced British authority. Second, he suggests that local populations saw Russia as the rising power in the region. He presents an extremely ominous situation. Russian power is seen to be rising, and the stories and rumours told at the bazaar are compounding their perceived strength. This image of Russian ascendancy grew every day that Britain did not take action to prove otherwise. Third, Lal directly links perceptions about Russian power to Indian turmoil. Local rulers see the Anglo-Russian rivalry as an opportunity to cast off the shackles of British power. If the British are engaged in a conflict with Russia, they will be unable to maintain their Indian possessions. Finally, the reduction of British prestige presents an immediate and critical threat. In Lal's telling, Indian

¹¹⁹ Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul*, 2: 341.

subjects had already begun preparing for the coming revolt. The rioters and rebels stood ready to act at a moment's notice. Lal makes it clear that, if the British do not restore their prestige, their authority might be lost forever. The time for action was fast approaching.

It was feared that the siege of Herat and Russian intrigue in Kabul might present local rulers with their desired opportunity to revolt. B.D. Hopkins argues that “when the Burnes mission failed in early 1838, the British felt forced to act not because of its economic interests, but because of the political loss of prestige and concurrent political ramifications.”¹²⁰ British prestige was rapidly dissipating by the day. Action was necessary and had to be taken forthwith to save British power in India. Lieutenant General Sir John Keane, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Indus, proclaimed that the invasion's success was of the utmost importance because “the eyes of India will be upon us.”¹²¹

3.4 The Pedagogy of Sindh

The invasion of Afghanistan was a pedagogical tool from start to finish. The Indian government's desire to teach local rulers the importance of submitting to British power was central to their overall war plans and strategy. In order to ensure this lesson was successfully conveyed, the British followed a specific invasion route and pursued a series of objectives. The first stage of the invasion took place in Sindh, which forms part of Pakistan today. While the proclaimed primary objective of the war was to supplant Dost Mohammad Khan in Kabul, Keane expressed the importance of showcasing British power throughout the northwest borderlands of British India in the 1830s. He also made it clear that the overall success of the invasion was dependent

¹²⁰ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 50.

¹²¹ Sani Panhwar, *British Correspondence in Relation to Ameers of Sindh, 1836-1843* (Los Angeles: Panhwar, 2010), 243.

upon each ruler recognizing British primacy. In a letter to General Sir Henry Fane, Commander-in-Chief of India, he expressed the importance of subduing resistance in Sindh prior to advancing on Afghanistan. In order to ensure success, he requested “a brigade of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, and troop of horse artillery, should be sent down as early as possible as, until it seems to me, from the unexpected turn affairs have taken, to be of the utmost consequence that we should do the thing effectually in Sindh, because the eyes of India will be upon us, and so much depends on our success in the stake we hold upon the game.”¹²² Prior to this letter, Fane was directing Keane to march on Afghanistan without the capitulation of Sindh. Keane took issue with this order and argued instead the importance of controlling the entire invasion route. Sindh must be subdued by the Army of the Indus to bolster British prestige in two respects. First, success in Sindh was necessary to teach the Amirs to respect British power. Second, it would demonstrate that the British had the capability to control the entire region, not just Sindh or Afghanistan.

Keane sought a military engagement in Sindh prior to negotiating a treaty with the Amirs. This desire was based on the real objective underlying the invasion of Afghanistan, subduing local rulers through a demonstration of British military force. In his message to Lord Auckland, he reported that

the Ameers seem to have made up all their difference, and to have collected a mass of Beloochees, called an army, from all quarters, to their assistance. It is impossible from any information I have yet received, to estimate the number now at the capital, but it is probably not less than 20,000. They are all armed in their way, and consider themselves the most warlike and the best soldiers in the world, and the members believe, or pretended to believe, the same thing. It will, therefore, be necessary to teach them a lesson, and our latest information is that they are now crossing the river with the Ameers at their head, and bringing twelve pieces of artillery mounted, to give us battle. I sincerely hope it may be so, and it signifies not what their numbers may be against even my small, well equipped, and disciplined force, as I shall attack them without hesitation.¹²³

¹²² Ibid., 243.

¹²³ Ibid., 245.

Keane genuinely hopes for a battle en route to Hyderabad. This encounter would teach the Baluchis to respect the Indian army. Even though Keane was outnumbered, he was certain that the barbarian forces assembled by the Amirs were no match for his army. While he knew that an insurmountable gap existed between the organizational and technological capabilities of the two armies, his enemy did not. The Baluchis believed themselves to be not only equal to the British, but stronger. Keane sought to revise this irrational notion through force of arms. While these two forces never met on the battlefield, the Amirs were still forced to yield to British power.

The threat and display of military force was utilized to negotiate the terms of the uneven treaty between Sindh and the East India Company. On February 4, 1839, Henry Pottinger, the Resident in Sindh, sent a report to the Private Secretary of the Governor General discussing his negotiations with the Amirs of Sindh. He makes it clear that intimidation was one of his primary tactics during these talks. He states that “the fort at Kurachee fired one or two guns at the ‘Wellesley’ when the reserve went there. The Admiral brought his broadside to bear on it, and it is stated he has leveled it with the dust. I have sent to the Ameers to say, that if they ‘shake their lip,’ Sir John Keane shall do so by Hyderabad, and I will insist on the removal of every person in authority from Kurachee who is now there, before I bring away the reserve. It will teach these savages to pay due respect to the British flag in time to come.”¹²⁴ Pottinger uses the impending arrival of Keane and his force at Hyderabad to force the Amirs to accept British terms. He employs the devastation of Karachi to prove the capability of British arms. By destroying the fort at Karachi, the “Wellesley” openly showcased British muscle. In order to avoid a similar fate, the Amirs of Sindh were forced to submit. This message is further connected to the objective in Kabul. Pottinger tells the Amirs that if they refuse to acquiesce, that he will remove them from

¹²⁴ Ibid., 258.

their posts. Through this threat, Pottinger suggests that the British have the right to act as king-makers in Central Asia. This engagement is also meant to have permanent effects. Pottinger hopes that the destruction of Karachi will make the Amirs more compliant in the future. Indeed, the bombardment and the threat of further action produced the desired results.

The British believed that they had successfully taught the inhabitants of Sindh and their rulers an important lesson according to Pottinger in his memorandum to the Secretary of the Governor General. He makes it clear that British power had forced the Amirs of Sindh to accept British demands and treaty stipulations. During the negotiations, he

begged them all to look back, particularly to the important events of the last six months, and reflect, if they had the slightest cause to question our fair dealing and desire to keep on good terms with them. I said, that they had themselves literally imposed on us the necessity of dictating the arrangements provided for by the late treaty; and that they must henceforth consider Sindh to be (as it was in reality) a portion of Hindoostan, in which our position was paramount, and entitled us to act as we considered best and fittest for the general good of the whole empire. Noor Mahomed Khan in person, and the different deputations from the other Ameers, admitted the truth of my observations. They said their 'eyes had been opened,' that they had been taught their experience of our strength and good faith; their wavering had arisen more from ignorance than design, that they judged of us as they would have done of each other; that they now saw their error, and were most solicitous to rectify it.¹²⁵

By deploying the Army of the Indus, the East India Company was able to bring Sindh under British influence. It was also able to open the navigation of the Indus to British merchants. By marching the army through Sindh, the Indian government greatly increased British prestige in the country. They were also able to prove their ability to shape Asian politics however they saw fit. The submission of Sindh ensured that the Army of the Indus's march through Asia had broad and far reaching effects.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 286.

3.5 The Lessons of Ghazni

The only major battle in the First Anglo-Afghan War took place at the fortress of Ghazni. This engagement provided Keane an opportunity to accomplish the two overarching objectives of the invasion, to assert British dominance in Central as well as South Asia and secure Shah Shuja's placement on the throne in Kabul. The stronghold of Ghazni was believed to be impregnable throughout Central Asia. This reputation made it the ideal site of Keane's lesson. During the invasion of Afghanistan, Mohan Lal served as a cultural adviser to Keane and other leading British officers. Lal highlights the perceived strength of the fortress when he states that, the Governor of Ghazni "Sardar Haidar Khan considered, moreover, the stronghold of Ghazni was never to be subdued by force of arms, and that when we were reduced in our supplies, and unable to maintain ourselves amidst the wrathful fanatics, the victory will result in favour of the garrison."¹²⁶ Ghazni was seen as invincible by its local defenders. Due to his position, the Governor's confidence in the strength of his fortress should be expected. This opinion was shared by local leaders. On the march from Kandahar to Ghazni, "Haji Khan Kakar, as well as Haji Dost Mohammed Khan, with other petty chiefs, hung back by slow marches to avoid their appearance in our camp, and to wait the result of our advance upon Ghazni."¹²⁷ The theory that the fortress would be capable of halting the British march is apparent in the actions of these local chieftains. Even though Kandahar had already surrendered to the Army of the Indus without incident, these leaders still did not rally around the British flag. To them, the outcome of the British invasion was still uncertain. In their view the fortress of Ghazni offered a formidable hurdle. If the Indian army failed at Ghazni, the march on Kabul might have been halted and Dost Mohammad Khan would have remained the Afghan sovereign. Thus the local chiefs avoided joining a side

¹²⁶ Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul Volume 2*, 225.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

until they were certain of the invasion's outcome. Their hesitancy demonstrates the local expectation that the stronghold could not be easily captured. This knowledge was shared by both sides of the encounter.

The capture of Ghazni further demonstrated that placing Shah Shuja on the throne was not the only objective of the Army of the Indus. The fortress represented a significant hazard. If the storming party failed, the march on Kabul would have been seriously crippled. Shah Shuja recognized this concern and advocated avoiding the fort altogether. According to Major William Hough, "the *Shah* took a different view of the case, he thought that, in our peculiar situation, we could not take the place with our present ordnance; and his advice was to leave the fort behind and march on for Cabool."¹²⁸ Several aspects of the Shah's counsel warrant attention. First, his desire to avoid Ghazni underlines the perceived strength of the fortress. He believed that it could not be easily taken and that a British victory was not certain. Second, the fact that the Shah was either ignored or overridden suggests that Keane had other objectives in storming Ghazni. If the invasion was only meant to place Shuja on the throne, this battle and its location presented an unnecessary risk. It is likely that the success of the invasion would require an eventual engagement between the British and the Afghans. Forcing the battle to take place at Ghazni does not appear to be the most prudent option. Challenging the Afghans at their stronghold was meant to demonstrate the overwhelming power of British arms. If the British could defeat the Afghans even where they possessed the defensive advantage, there would be no doubt about the disparity between British and local power.

¹²⁸ William Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus, In the Expedition to Afghanistan in the Year 1838-1839* (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1841), 169.

The real strength and symbolic value of Ghazni was clearly articulated by the military planners of the Indian army. Keane was fully informed of the view of locals that Ghazni was an unconquerable fortress. He was also aware that these assumptions were held throughout Central Asia, not just Afghanistan. The fall of Ghazni would demonstrate the indisputable power of British arms, and would therefore, teach a lasting lesson. After capturing Ghazni, he wrote to Auckland informing him “that the army under my command have succeeded in performing one of the most brilliant acts it has ever been my lot to witness during my service of 45 years, in the four quarters of the globe, in the capture, by storm, of the strong and important fortress and citadel of Ghuznee yesterday. It is not only that the Afghan nation, and I understand, Asia generally, have looked upon it as impregnable, but it is in reality a place of great strength, both by nature and art.”¹²⁹ He makes it clear that the fall of Ghazni was a critical event in the East India Company’s military and diplomatic history. He goes on to say that the “brilliant triumph we have obtained, the cool courage displayed, and the gallant bearing of the troops I have the honour to command, will have taught such a lesson to our enemies in Affghan nation, as will make them hereafter respect the name of a British soldier.”¹³⁰ By quickly seizing the citadel, the Army of the Indus had visibly exhibited British capabilities. The overwhelming success, culminating in the British flag flying over the citadel, broadcast the Army’s success to their enemies throughout Asia. This victory was to have lasting effects throughout the region. Unlike the immediate objective of supplanting Dost Mohammad Khan, the Army was attempting to ensure the long-term tranquility and submission of Central Asia. Keane adamantly believed that this dramatic victory would produce this desired state of affairs.

¹²⁹ Lieutenant-general Sir J. Keane to the Governor-General, 24 July 1839. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 10 (1840).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

The immediate results of the fall of Ghazni signaled that Keane's action had accomplished its objective. The British victory was quickly followed by local chieftains officially recognizing Shah Shuja's claim to the throne. According to Lal, "one day after the capture of Ghazni, Haji Khan Kakar, along with Haji Dost Mohamed Khan and the other Durrani chiefs, who had designedly hung back from our camp on a former occasion, began now to a new course of conduct, as I have noticed previously; but now they opened their tongues for flattery, showering the flowers of praise on our soldiers, which indeed, they really deserved; and said that no one had ever thought in Afghanistan of our capturing the stronghold of Ghazni in such a short time, and that therefore they did not hurry themselves to join our camp."¹³¹ The victory at Ghazni proved to the local chieftains that the British were now the predominant power in the country. They quickly joined the Shah's entourage in order to ensure that they were seen as allied to the new sovereigns of the country. This statement also expresses the rapid increase in British prestige. Local leaders did not expect the Indian army would conquer their country, or at least not as quickly as they did. The stunning pace of the invasion overturned local suppositions about British military capabilities. It was now devastatingly clear that submission was more desirable than challenging the British. According to the report sent from Auckland to the Secret Committee of the East India Company, the crushing defeat also led to Dost Mohammad Khan abandoning his army and abdicating the throne.¹³² The British took these signs as proof of their success and their rising power throughout Central Asia.

The fall of Ghazni and its repercussions were seen as critical to maintaining British India and asserting British prestige in the region. The importance of these events was clearly ex-

¹³¹ Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul Volume 2*, 246.

¹³² The Governor-general to the Secret Committee, 29 August 1839. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 10 (1840).

pressed by the top officials of the East India Company. According to Auckland's letter to Keane on August 26, 1839,

had the force assembled by Dost Mohammed at Urghundee, to oppose the advance of your Excellency's army, maintained its position till its arrival there, I cannot entertain a doubt that a glorious triumph would have awaited the British arms; and that one more example would have been given to the people of Affghanistan, and the surrounding countries, of the superior discipline and valour of the forces under your Excellency's command. But your Excellency must have felt the satisfaction of reflecting, that the defection which took place among the followers of Dost Mohammed, and his precipitate flight, though evincing the influence already exercised by the approach of the legitimate sovereign, were attributable, in no small degree, to the conviction which they had learned to entertain the hopelessness of resistance against such distinguished skill and prowess as had, a few days before, led the British army in triumph into the citadel of Ghuznee and it is to be hoped that the measure which has been accomplished of restoring this prince to the throne of his ancestors will be productive to peace and prosperity in the country over which he rules, and will confirm the just influence of the British government in the regions of Central Asia.¹³³

In this letter, Auckland expresses several critical points that suggest that the primary objective of the invasion transcended the Kabul throne. First, the storming of Ghazni served as unmistakable proof of British power and the reach of this power beyond the borders of Afghanistan. He hoped that the peoples in all the surrounding countries would take notice of this striking victory. Second, he argues that this success will prevent turmoil in the future. The elevation of British prestige made challenging their power a hopeless operation. Resistance would be useless, and the British would be able to maintain their influence in the region without having to subdue further instances of turmoil. Finally, he believed that the lesson of Ghazni would validate Britain's influence throughout the region. By triumphantly placing Shah Shuja on the throne, the Company had proven their ability to not only influence rulers but to determine who was fit to rule each territory in the region. If local rulers wanted to maintain their authority, it was incumbent upon them to accept British demands. If they refused to submit, they would be replaced by a more

¹³³ The Governor-general to Sir John Keane, 26 August 1839. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 10 (1840).

compliant intermediary. The storming of Ghazni was a trophy victory that the British hoped would “add a fresh lustre to the reputation of the armies of India.”¹³⁴

3.6 Dethroning God

Religion played a central role in the life and politics of Afghanistan. Various leaders in the country attempted to employ Islam to advance their claims to power. It was also used as a way of unifying disparate groups throughout the country against a common foe. According to B.D. Hopkins, “Islam provided the Afghan socio-political universe the conceptual language with which to describe its non-tribal neighbours who stood outside the agnatic normative order. It therefore served as the medium of communication, and at time an idiom of confrontation, for interacting with those people. As Afghans increasingly found themselves faced with hostile and powerful non-Muslim foreign powers, leaders employed the language of Islam to rally tribesmen as well as de-legitimize first Sikh and later British encroachment.”¹³⁵ The Afghan political environment was a relatively decentralized, if not fractured system. Different groups maintained their local independence, and at most, rendered partial recognition to a central ruler. While there was significant local difference, Islam provided a language that could unify these often rival groups. Through this language, a foreign power could be presented as a threat to the religious community as a whole, rather than to an individual tribe or leader. Consequently the British saw Islam as a means of inciting local resistance and producing violent turmoil on the frontiers of India.

The political exploitation of Islam was vital to the rule of Dost Mohammed Khan. Since the Barukzye family did not possess the historical claim to the throne, hereditary right could not

¹³⁴ Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus*, Appendix 21.

¹³⁵ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 102.

be used to legitimize his rule. He attempted to overcome this limitation by using Islam to justify his claims. He “adopted the Arabic title *amir*, in lieu of the more traditional Persian title *shah*.”¹³⁶ This decision clearly demonstrated his desire to assert his religious claim to the throne, since this title, *amir al-mu'minin*, is usually translated as commander of the faithful. Hopkins confirms this when he says that “Dost Mohammad therefore attempted to create a new basis of legitimacy, primarily Islamic in nature. But Dost Mohammad’s efforts to construct a façade of Islamic legitimacy relied on his weaknesses rather than his strengths. With Afghan realms under threat from within and without, Dost Mohammad attempted to capitalize on these threats by casting them in religious terms.”¹³⁷ Dost Mohammad Khan attempted to legitimize his rule by inciting *jihād* against the British *infidels* and their puppet, Shah Shuja. The British believed that in order to successfully dethrone Dost Mohammad Khan that they had to undermine his religious message. The perceived religious fanaticism and the British desire to undermine it, is prevalent throughout British war planning and account of the conflict.

Prior to the Battle of Ghazni, Keane recognized the threat posed to his army by what he saw as religious militants. In his description of the battlefield, he noted the arrival of “two rebel chiefs of the Ghiljje tribe, men of great influence, viz. Abdool Ruhman and Gool Mohamed Khan, had joined him (Sardar Haidar Khan) with 1,500 horse, and also a body of about 3,000 Ghayeer from Zeenat, under a mixture of chiefs and moollas carrying banners, and who had assembled on the cry of a religious war, in short, we were in all directions surrounded by the enemy.”¹³⁸ Keane believed that his enemies were motivated by religious fervor. Rather than just describing the number of soldiers and types of weaponry, he attempts to provide the motivations

¹³⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 105.

¹³⁸ Lieutenant-general Sir J. Keane to the Governor-General, 24 July 1839. BL. Parliamentary Papers. Vol. 10 (1840).

behind their resistance. He suggests that they were led by mullahs rather than military commanders, and that these mullahs were preaching *jihad* in order to bring these zealots to the field. In addition, immediately after suggesting that the enemy line is primarily made up of religious fanatics, he says that his army is surrounded. By inciting *jihad*, the mullahs had been able to surround the relatively small Army of the Indus. Through Keane's imagery, an even broader threat becomes apparent. If mullahs can inflame religious feeling in Ghazni, they can do the same throughout Central Asia. In order to maintain their control in India and extend their influence around the region, the British had to show that their power in the battlefield rivaled that of God.

Challenging the faith of the Afghans was critical to the Indian army's success. Prior to storming the fort and capturing the citadel, British forces engaged a large formation of cavalry on the surrounding heights. This faction was the same religious force described by Keane. In order to cut off their route to join in the coming battle, and to undermine the faith of the defenders, Captain James Outram, Keane's military Aide-de-Camp, led an attack on their position. He described this attack and its outcome in his war journal. He recounts that

step by step we thus at last attained the loftiest peak, over the crest of which floated the holy banner of green and white, the largest and most conspicuous in the ranks of the host, the first unfurling of which by the Moslem High Priest, who had preached a crusade against the British, had called together a mob of fanatics, who judging from their reckless personal exposure must have been deceived into the belief that they were safe under the charm of its sacred influence. Towards this objective we made our way, ascending a very precipitous acclivity under a smart fire, from which we were sheltered by the rocks, until, on our arriving within fifty paces of the enemy, a fortunate shot brought down the standard-bearer. The whole of our party then rushing up with a great cheer, the banner was seized, whilst the enemy, panic-stricken at the proof of the fallacy of their belief, fled with precipitation.¹³⁹

Outram's description of the encounter draws out several important ideas. First, he emphasizes the religious motivations of his enemy. He contends that the British are being challenged by re-

¹³⁹ James Outram, *Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sindh and Afghanistan in 1838-1839: Being Extracts from a Personal Journal Kept While on the Staff of the Army of the Indus* (Bombay: American Mission Press, 1840), 96-97.

religious-minded rather than kinships – or clientage-based adversaries. Second, these fanatics are so convinced in the justice of their cause, and its divine support, that they seem oblivious to the dangers of battle. The unpredictable actions of these soldiers must have appeared as an especially worrying trait to the Indian army. If these individuals believed themselves to be immune to British force, they would never become docile. In order to force their submission, the British had to torpedo their faith. Outram and his soldiers had to claim their religious symbol, as a way of demonstrating its inability to protect them against the British onslaught. As soon as the holy banner fell, the Afghan defenders fled from the battlefield. Through the capture of the holy banner, and the military stronghold of Ghazni, the British taught their rivals that faith could not save them from British power. The Army of the Indus actively sought to undermine any source of strength or symbol of resistance during their march to Kabul.

3.7 The Military Review

Throughout the invasion of Afghanistan, the Army of the Indus employed various military spectacles to showcase British military might and force local submission. The military parade was one of the most frequently utilized of these performances. This type of demonstration took place at several critical points during the invasion. The military parade was heavily utilized due to its symbolic meaning and the powerful image it presented. According to Myerly, in the first half of the nineteenth-century, “the army was still the main vehicle to maintain and restore order, and it was successful in fulfilling these duties in large part because of the power of military spectacle to awe and intimidate.”¹⁴⁰ As Myerly suggests, the military was not only deployed to win direct engagements with the enemy. The army was equally important because of its abil-

¹⁴⁰ Myerly, *British Military Spectacle*, 120.

ity to inspire fear in the mind of potential adversaries. Due to the cost and uncertainty of war, it was more desirable to force an enemy into submission through pomp and display than actual combat. The Army of the Indus staged military reviews at every point of the conflict in order to subdue their Afghan rivals on the invasion route and to demonstrate the power of their force to the regional audience.

The military review was employed to expedite the treaty negotiation in Sindh. Prior to the destruction of Karachi and the march of Keane's reserve force, the Amirs of Sindh attempted to resist the unequal treaty thrust upon them by the British. At this point, the Amirs had not directly witnessed the size or capabilities of the Indian army. During the negotiations between General Fane and one of the Amirs of Sindh,

the duly ratified *treaty* was produced, upon which the Ameer, said *he* would insist on *Noor Mahomed Ali*, of Hyderabad, agreeing to our terms. Sir H. Fane replied, 'I have wasted time enough treating; I will *now* march down, and attack him; and if you like, I will show you the troops I shall send to do it.' The review of the Cavalry brigade, and the 2nd T. 2nd B. Bengals II took place in the evening. The Ameer was astonished at the Military array, but expressed his fears of seeing the *Europeans!*¹⁴¹

The threat of military force was used to expedite treaty negotiations. Prior to actually engaging the Amirs in Hyderabad, Fane demonstrated his strength to the Amir who took part in the negotiations. This display of force was meant to terrify the Amir, and force him to accept the treaty being discussed. Fane's action had two important aspects. First, he threatened the Amir with the use of force. He did not limit his threat to words, however, he showed the Amir the army that would carry out his intentions. The military performance made Fane's threat more credible and imposing. The significance of the review would become increasingly obvious as the Army of the Indus crossed through the Bolan Pass.

¹⁴¹ Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus*, 17.

The British performed a larger and more influential spectacle upon entering Kandahar. On May 8, 1839, the Army of the Indus staged a military ceremony to recognize Shah Shuja's return to the ancient capital of the Durrani Empire. For the ceremony,

the whole of the British army (Bengal and Bombay) was drawn up in a line, at the dawn of day, in front of the city of Candahar to the North amounting to about 7,500 men. A platform, or throne, was erected in the midst of an extensive plain. At sunrise, the guns of the palace announced His Majesty's departure. The 'Army of the Indus' then marched round, in front of the throne, in review order; the grand ceremony presented an imposing spectacle. There was about 3 or 4,000 Afghans assembled to view the scene.¹⁴²

During the military review, only the British army was formed up and marched around the throne. The Shah's Afghan forces did not take part in the ceremony. What this arrangement showcased was British power rather than the combined capabilities of the two forces. Hough also calls his readers attention to the number of Afghans at the ceremony. Several thousand locals witnessed the commanding spectacle. While these numbers may seem relatively small, it still produced the desired effect. The witnesses could quickly pass on impressions of British strength by virtue of the rapid diffusion of information in Central Asia through the bazaar and trade routes. Lal confirms the British desire to influence more than just the Afghans in attendance. He explains that the "grand ceremony was not only imposing for form's sake, but was caused with the view to awe the Afghans and the Ghilzais, through whose country we had yet to pass on our way to Kabul."¹⁴³ Both Hough and Lal make it clear that the military review in Kandahar was enacted with specific objectives in mind. The British purposefully paraded the entirety of the British Army to ensure that spectators witnessed its full potential. Locals observed foot soldiers, cavalry, and artillery. They were exposed to the full European arsenal.

¹⁴² Ibid., 106.

¹⁴³ Lal, *Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul Volume 2*, 211.

The military parade also allowed the British to prove their ability to make Afghanistan in Europe's image. Upon reaching Kabul, the Army of the Indus orchestrated a *Grand Review* for the accession of Shah Shuja.¹⁴⁴ Enacting a *Grand Review* meant that the accession of the Shah was enacted through European imagery. According to Myerly, "grand reviews were usually held in conjunction with some major event, such as the anniversary of a battle, or a royal accession or birthday, or some other royal celebration, and they often involved great number of soldiers and spectators."¹⁴⁵ The Army of the Indus celebrated Shah Shuja's return to the throne in a similar fashion to royal ceremonies in London. By putting on a performance in Kabul, that had its meaning and origins in London, the imperial officials connected the two capitals. Like the British monarch, the Afghan ruler was now placed upon his throne, and protected by, British bayonets. The *Grand Review* reminded the Shah, and all those present, that Britain alone possessed the ability to choose the Afghan sovereign. The Court of Kabul was now diplomatically and symbolically connected to London.

3.8 The Communicative Power of Gun Salutes

The Indian government sought to announce their growing prestige throughout the region. In order to generate as far-reaching results as possible, the British had to ensure that not just combatants observed their victories, but that it was experienced by all of the peoples it hoped to dominate. The British utilized gun salutes to broadcast their military victories throughout South Asia. The gun salute was an established means of communicating power relations and political prestige by the East Indian Company. It was often used to recognize and rank princely rulers.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus*, 260.

¹⁴⁵ Myerly, *British Military Spectacle*, 141.

¹⁴⁶ Coostas Constantinou, *States of Political Discourse: Words, Regimes, Seditions* (London: Routledge, 2004), 39.

The local audience's knowledge of the gun salute and its political meaning made it an ideal tool for communicating the events in Afghanistan. The British fired guns in both Afghanistan and India, thus ensuring that the invasion would influence native rulers and peoples throughout the region.

Gun salutes were fired throughout Afghanistan to celebrate Shah Shuja's return to the throne. This recognition was meant to place the Shah on equal footing with other native rulers in British India. They also publicly declared the Indian government's right and ability to determine the sovereign of each territory within their sphere of influence. In addition, the gun salute was used as a way of rewarding loyalty to the British.¹⁴⁷ One of the most important gun salutes took place upon Shah Shuja's arrival in Kandahar. Hough recounts this event in his detailed war journal. He states that on April 25, 1839, he "heard a 'Royal Salute' and firing at Candahar, in honour of Shah Shooja-ool-Moolk's entry into the ancient Dorranee capital of Affghanistan."¹⁴⁸ By firing a "Royal Salute" in Kandahar, the British were making several proclamations to the surrounding territories. First, they were celebrating the successful and unopposed march of the Army of the Indus. Second, they were placing Shah Shuja on equal footing with the other native rulers in India. Through the firing of a "Royal Salute," as opposed to limiting the number of rounds to single digits, the British immediately elevated the Shah to a position equal to the most loyal native rulers. Third, and most importantly, they were announcing the ability of British arms to place a native ruler of their choice on the ancient thrones of Asia. By firing a "Royal Salute" in Kandahar, the British seemed to be asserting their control over more than just the current territories controlled by Kabul. Rather, they were proclaiming that all the territories that had fallen under the Durrani Empire were now under British influence. This territory extended be-

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁸ Hough, *A Narrative of the March and Operations of the Army of the Indus*, 93.

yond just Kandahar, Ghazni, and Kabul, and encompassed the entirety of modern day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The British were thus asserting their control over the entirety of the borderlands to the northwest of British India.

The gun salute in Kabul published an equally important message. According to Hough, upon Shah Shuja's entry into Kabul, "he was escorted by a troop of Horse Artillery, 1 Squadron his Majesty's 16th Lancers, who were paraded in review order in front of the lines, and on the road leading to Cabool. A royal salute was fired as His Majesty approached the escort, and the squadrons saluted him as he passed; after which, they wheeled up, and followed in procession to the entrance of the town, when they were again formed; and where another royal salute was fired."¹⁴⁹ This display communicated several important ideas. First, the Shah was welcomed into the Afghan capital by a formation of British soldiers and the firing of British artillery. By using British arms to announce his welcome, there was no doubt about who was responsible for his return. The British were making it clear to all those witnessing the event, that they were the true sovereigns of the country, and that their reach now extended from India to Kabul. This message was further enforced by the second royal salute. Once Shah Shuja had entered his capital, the army fired again. This seems to have communicated the intent to use British arms to defend the Shah and to maintain British influence in the capital. The Indian Army was responsible for the capture of Kabul, and they were now responsible for its defence. The dual firing was meant to leave no doubt in the minds of local observers about the newly established power relationship in the country.

Gun salutes recognizing the successes of the Army of the Indus were not limited strictly to the territories of Afghanistan. Since the Indian government sought to affirm and increase their

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 186.

prestige throughout India, they had to declare their success in all their possessions. They also had to ensure that their message could be easily accessed and understood by both local rulers and peoples. In order to announce their victories to as many groups as possible, gun salutes were fired throughout India. After the capture of Ghazni, the Secret Committee of the East India Company gave a general order on August 18, 1839 commanding “a salute of twenty-one guns will be fired on the receipt of this intelligence at all the principle stations of the Army in the three Presidencies.”¹⁵⁰ Through this order, the Indian government was ensuring that their power was announced and experienced by the entire population that inhabited their Indian possessions. The firing of artillery would have been either witnessed or heard by vast numbers of locals both within and around these stations. Similar orders were given during the capture of Kandahar and Kabul. The Indian government ensured that the native population in India was constantly informed about the British invasion, and therefore, about its increasing power and prestige in the region. Through this knowledge, the British sought to make resistance and rebellion seem utterly hopeless.

3.9 Conclusion

The invasion of Afghanistan was meant to increase British prestige throughout India and Central Asia. By employing a specific invasion route, and the military spectacles performed by the army along the way, the British presented a clear message to local audiences. The Indian government proved their ability to easily defeat any army or stronghold in Asia. In addition, they demonstrated their right to control not only how a sovereign ruled, but who was allowed to do it. Local rulers were taught that submission and loyalty to the Company was a requirement

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 203.

for the maintenance of their rule. The native peoples were shown the absolute hopelessness of revolt. However, in order for the Indian government to maintain their control in Kabul, their securitizing move now had to be accepted in London.

4. SECURITIZATION ASCENDANT: THE AUTHORITATIVE DISCOURSE OF SECURITY IN THE METROPOLE

It is not merely that our armies advanced, upon an adequate emergency, far beyond the frontier of our empire, have triumphed over the difficulties natural to a mountainous country, inhabited by fierce and warlike tribes, greatly enhanced by the severe privations to which such a service, at a vast distance from their resources, necessarily exposed them, and that they have consummated their glory by planting the standard of England upon the towers of the citadel, from which, more than eight hundred years before, MAHMOOD of Ghizni, surnamed the Idol-breaker, led out the wild horsemen of the Steppe of the Caspian to reap the first harvest of Mahomedan spoliation in the rich bazaars and temples of Hindostan: we shall form a very insufficient estimate of the value of these gallant achievements, and the merit due to the political wisdom that planned them, unless we contemplate the position in which Lord AUCKLAND stood at the time when he formed the high resolve of entering upon the avowedly hazardous course, which it has pleased the god of battles to crown with such entire success.

Morning Chronicle, November, 28 1839

4.1 Introduction

The process of securitization becomes much more effective if a *securitizing actor* can elevate the problem of security to the level of an *authoritative discourse*. In order for security to gain this power, it must be accepted by more than just the *empowering audience*. According to Balzacq,

securitizing agents always strive to convince as broad an audience as possible because they need to maintain a social relationship with the target individual group. In common with the desire to transmit information, political officials are responsive to the fact that winning formal support while breaking social bonds with constituencies can wreck their credibility. That explains, while seeking formal acquiescence, political officials also cloak security arguments in the semantic repertoire of the national audience in order to win support.¹⁵¹

While the *empowering audience* is the primary target of a *securitizing move*, *securitizing actors* must connect with the entire population. If the *securitizing actor* alienates the majority of the populace, they will be unable to claim that their actions were legitimate. *Securitizing actors* seek

¹⁵¹ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 9.

to craft their message in such a way that it will be persuasive and desirable to the larger public. By transcending the closed rhetorical space of official politics, *securitizing actors* are capable of raising security to the level of an *authoritative discourse*.

Authoritative discourses are especially powerful due to their ability to shape any corresponding discussions. When an idea becomes an *authoritative discourse*, it demands recognition and consent. According to M.M. Bakhtin, an

authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. Its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain.¹⁵²

As he suggests, certain words become elevated and assume unquestionable influence. Once a word is accepted as *authoritative*, it shapes all future dialogues. Discussion is no longer about whether a subject warrants attention, but how it should be understood. I contend that successful securitization will result in *security* becoming an *authoritative discourse*. If a *referent object* is successfully securitized, the debate is no longer about whether the *referent object* should be protected, but how. Achieving the status of *authoritative discourse* infuses a notion of security and its advocates with newfound power and influence.

Raising an idea to the level of an *authoritative discourse* is supremely beneficial within policy debates. Its achievement provides its advocates with a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the public. However, the need to justify a policy fractures the policymaker's authority. David Spurr contends that

¹⁵² Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 342.

in theory, a clear and fully present authority would never find itself in the position of having to defend itself; there is no demand for proof when a truth is sufficiently authoritative to be self-evident. Once authority begins to be asserted however, there opens up a split between assertion and authority itself, in which the latter is revealed as conditional and contingent on its representation. Affirmations of authority can now be seen as strategic devices necessary for the maintenance of that authority, rather than a simple manifestation of an unquestioned presence.¹⁵³

Spurr makes several arguments that are critical to analyzing securitization as an *authoritative discourse*. First, he suggests that no authority is ever total. Even when an idea seems to be officially and universally sanctioned, it is merely covering past disputes. This contested nature means that *authoritative discourses* have a history, which, can be studied. Second, he argues that a perceived fact is merely a representation. This representation is not an actual presentation of facts, but rather, the specific message that an authority seeks to broadcast. Finally, by demonstrating that these images are merely representations, Spurr suggests that they serve as tools of power. Representations then, whether they are produced by official or unofficial sources, serve as part of a larger *dispositif* of power. These image repertoires must be analyzed alongside other imperial tools.

Threatening representations were vital in justifying the policies pursued by British imperial officials. According to M.E. Yapp, “the British view of India, as expressed in Press and Parliament, was an important constraint upon British Indian policy, or at least upon the ways in which policies could be discussed. Arguments about the defence of India had to be phrased in a manner which would not leave room for critics to declare India to be a burden upon Britain.”¹⁵⁴ The Indian government was constrained by two specific groups within the metropole. They had to convince both Parliament and the popular press that British actions on India’s borders were

¹⁵³ David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 124.

¹⁵⁴ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 3.

justified. In order to analyze their *securitizing move*, it is necessary to study how it was expressed in both official and unofficial sources. The Indian government had to prove that their actions were beneficial to Britain, to the metropole and not just the colony. Their policies could not be a drain upon the imperial purse, and they had to advance Britain's position in the European balance of power. Yapp goes on to say that the language of security served to bridge the actions of the Indian government to the emotions of the metropolitan audience. Yapp asserts that "the only strategy which linked all elements in the diverse hierarchies was the strategy based on the theory of externally-induced, internal disaffection. It offered something to everyone and was virtually irrefutable."¹⁵⁵ Through the language of security, imperial officials were able to successfully articulate their argument for intervention in Afghanistan.

The metropolitan audience in Great Britain was presented a coordinated assemblage of "metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, and emotions"¹⁵⁶ in order to justify the invasion of Afghanistan. In this chapter, I argue that the security of India was elevated to the level an *authoritative discourse*. This ascension was achieved through the presentation of a specific set of *heuristic artefacts* in the popular press. These articles were dependent upon several major themes. They included the appearance of *unbiased* information favorable to military action, the recognition of the commercial and fiscal value of India, the imminence of an existential threat prior to the invasion, the belief in the need for energetic and prompt action to counter this menace, and the expectation of positive results following from an invasion. The press developed the ubiquitous belief that the security of British India was endangered and the invasion of Afghanistan was necessary.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 591.

¹⁵⁶ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 3.

4.2 Convincing the Public

Initially, there was limited knowledge in the British metropole about Afghanistan and its relationship with British India. Military action, however, quickly drew the gaze of the metropolitan public, for the most part business and professional men of the middle class who took an interest in the nation, the empire, and the wider world. The British press attempted to fill this lack of knowledge with what was presented as *unbiased* and *objective* reports. These reports were dependent upon the knowledge and actions of officialdom. According to Partha Chatterjee, “the pressure of democratic accountability would force all liberal powers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to bring colonial governance under some sort of parliamentary control. Yet it would always retain its character as a sphere ruled by experts who would demand and enjoy a degree of autonomy from supervision by an ignorant and uncomprehending metropolitan audience along with its elected representatives.”¹⁵⁷ As Chatterjee suggests, the increased role of Parliament in imperial affairs brought the actions of the Indian government under closer scrutiny. However, due to restricted and asymmetrical access to colonial knowledge, both Parliament and the public were reliant upon the reports produced by imperial and Indian government officials. The Indian government was able to present a contrived narrative that legitimized their actions. The control of colonial knowledge was crucial to asserting its benefits at home.

The press sought to claim a position of objectivity and neutrality on Indian affairs. Since it was reporting on actual events and utilizing the facts of official documents to corroborate the truthfulness of their accounts, the press asserted its ability to report reality. According to Spurr, however, “journalism and other forms of nonfiction, despite conventional expectation, depend on

¹⁵⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 182.

the use of myth, symbol, metaphor, and other rhetorical procedures more often associated with fiction and poetry.”¹⁵⁸ Although journalism is generally presented as a fact-based endeavor, Spurr makes it clear that it is bound by the same rhetorical tools prevalent in other genres. The press conjures specific images of current events in the minds of its readers. Spurr goes on to say that “against the background of this daily disintegration, however, the media also presents their prescription for unity within the context of established institutions, so that ‘policies of corporate and state authority are played out as visions of unification and order against the general mural of chaos.’ The rhetorical economy of media creates a demand for images of chaos in order that the principles of a governing ideology and the need for institutions of order may be affirmed.”¹⁵⁹ Several aspects of Spurr’s argument are helpful for analyzing journalism about the First Anglo-Afghan War. First, the media entrenches the authority of existing governmental institutions. They are presented as the only practical option for coping with existing chaos. Second, he suggests that journalism consistently produces images of violence and doom. These representations present a menace that is easily understood and that requires action to counter. Finally, journalism affirms the belief that the government must take action to resolve these issues. In sum, the press claims to be an objective messenger, and uses this authority to advocate the need for governmental action.

The British press claimed the right to educate the public on the situation in Asia based upon the metropole’s inconsequential knowledge of the region. The *Edinburgh Review* states that even though India is of significant value to Britain, that “British India is almost a *terra incognita* to the great body of educated Englishmen. Though this little island possesses an empire

¹⁵⁸ Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

in the East that the Caesars might envy.”¹⁶⁰ This statement suggests British imperial possessions received limited attention in the metropole unless a major event introduced a threat to the prosperity and safety of the country. This belief is confirmed by the *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia*. It states that “Eastern affairs have rarely taken such firm hold of public attention in this country as during the last few months. The events beyond the Indus, on the one hand, and in China on the other, deeply affecting our territorial dominion in India and our commerce in the East, justly claimed that attention which has been, however, till of late, very reluctantly conceded to Oriental politics.”¹⁶¹ The situation in Asia rarely received close scrutiny from the literate and educated metropolitan public. This changed when Britain was drawn into two major conflicts in the East. By the time the demand was made for information about India and China, however, wars had already commenced. Thus, we can say that neither members of Parliament or the public were adequately informed about the situation in Asia prior to the beginning of military action.

Press coverage made it clear that ignorance of Asian affairs prevailed in Parliament as well as in the public. The press asserted that Parliament had attempted to make determinations about Indian policy without being adequately educated. Members of Parliament first should have read the official papers before judging the actions of the Indian government. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, “we wish those who so lately joined in denouncing the policy of Lord AUCKLAND, had awaited the production of the papers just laid upon the table of the House of Commons by Sir J. HOBHOUSE. At the time, we said the condemnation in the absence of all evidence was, at least, premature; and it is impossible for any impartial man to read the docu-

¹⁶⁰ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 330.

¹⁶¹ “Review of Eastern News: Number 28,” *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia* 31 (January – April 1840): 205.

ments without feeling that it has been also grievously unjust.”¹⁶² The *Examiner* seconded this view telling its readership that some of the peers in the Lords had been “determining upon the merits of Lord Auckland’s policy in India without hearing *either side of the question*, or knowing one syllable about the matter. The papers which have been recently laid before Parliament must be a terrible blow to these factious assailants, but from their extent it cannot be expected that many will take the trouble of reading them.”¹⁶³ Together, these two articles provide crucial insight into the state of colonial information that existed in the metropole. First, they suggest that a faction of parliamentarians attempted to challenge the Indian government on the invasion. It is suggested, however, that this faction was not adequately educated about Indian affairs and had failed to justify its right to judge Auckland’s decision. Second, both articles submit that the Parliamentary Papers on the “Correspondence Related to Affghanistan and the Occupation of Karrak,” produced on March 26, 1839, gave an accurate account of political realities in Central Asia prior to the invasion. They contend that these documents must be read and understood prior to a politician making an informed decision. These documents, however, were produced by the Indian government and the East India Company Board of Directors. Therefore, the planners of the invasion exercised considerable influence over how the metropole saw and understood the geopolitical environment in South and Central Asia. Even though actors with a vested interest in the war compiled these documents, the information was treated as unbiased and its producers depicted as experts on the spot. Finally, both of these articles argue that military action was the only sensible strategy based on the evidence. These articles both attack the credibility of the political opposition, and assert the desirability of the invasion.

¹⁶² *Morning Chronicle*, April 8, 1839.

¹⁶³ “Affairs of India,” *Examiner*, April 14, 1839.

Prior to reporting on the war, the press insisted on the importance of the region. It also claimed that more attention should be given to the events transpiring across the Indus. The *Morning Chronicle* explained that “the policy of the Governor-General of India, which, carried into execution by the energy, endurance, and valour of our troops, has issued in the complete establishment of British ascendancy in Affghanistan, deserves a more comprehensive consideration than we, or any of our contemporaries, have yet bestowed upon it; for the result is far more important than appears from the surface.”¹⁶⁴ This article asserts that further information and coverage about Afghan affairs is critical. The newspaper’s readership must be informed about this subject, due to its considerable importance. The writer also asserts the desirability of the war by praising the army. The importance of this subject was further elaborated upon by the *Edinburgh Review*. It endeavored to “encourage and facilitate the first steps of public intelligence in the acquisition of knowledge so important and interesting, by laying before our readers a rapid sketch of the present state and future prospects of our Indian empire.”¹⁶⁵ The writer urges readers to become informed about the important situation in Central Asia. In addition, the writer uses the term “our” when discussing the Indian empire. The value of territorial expansion is not the concern of only the East India Company. Rather, the use of “our” suggests that the Indian empire is possessed by all Britons. This ownership requires the metropolitan public be informed about the empire.

The press claimed the right to make a disinterested judgment about the need for war. This objectivity is meant to provide them with the authority to shape the minds of their readership. The press claims that they have no interest in the outcome of the invasion and are therefore capable of providing balanced and reasonable judgment on the military action. Journalists assert

¹⁶⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1839.

¹⁶⁵ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 331.

their disinterestedness prior to presenting the “facts” about the war. The *Monthly Review* tells their readership that they will “within a very narrow compass, in a plain and temperate manner, explain and defend the system of our India Government relative to the parties and the neighbors who have demonstrated that they cherish a desire to give us annoyance and to encroach upon our frontier, west of the Indus.”¹⁶⁶ The author immediately claims their neutrality and ability to correctly judge the actions of the Indian government. They suggest after viewing the invasion through an impartial lens, that the actions of the Indian government were just and necessary. Similar to the *Edinburgh Review*, this author uses the collective “our.” The empire is of critical importance to the metropole, not just the Company’s merchants and officials. The claim of detachment is also asserted by the *Edinburgh Review*. It tells its readers that it “shall endeavor to form our conclusions upon a calm examination of the points which appear to be at issue; without suffering ourselves to be dazzled, on the one hand, by the brilliant exploits of our troops; or to assume, on the other, that Lord Auckland did not take the wisest course which circumstances left open to him, merely because the course taken may have entailed some undeniable evils upon our Indian administration.”¹⁶⁷ This article claims the right to dispassionately arbitrate on the events in India. The article goes on, however, to use the most passionate and fiery language possible to justify war. This bias is evident even in its claim of neutrality. First, it asserts that the actions of the troops were “brilliant.” The reader is immediately exposed to the successful nature of the invasion. The statement suggests that the article will only discuss whether Auckland chose the correct course of action based upon the situation, which thereby assumes that some type of action was necessary. If the defence of India had to be pursued, the only question becomes whether the invasion of Afghanistan was the best choice. With the strategic issue closed, only the matter of

¹⁶⁶ “The Relations and Policy of British India,” *Monthly Review*, May 1839, 133.

¹⁶⁷ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 332.

tactics can be questioned. Thus the press asserted the right to educate the public about threats and actions without interrogating the fundamentals of the situation.

4.3 The Value of British India

In order to justify action, the Indian government had to prove that British India was worth the cost of military action beyond its border. At the heart of the question was the fiscal basis of British rule in India. According to Cain and Hopkins, “a more illuminating approach, we suggest is to view expansion into India from the mid-eighteenth century as illustrating the extension abroad of the social forces that dominated the policy at home after 1688. These aims, and the values that accompanied them, were extended to India: power was to be founded ultimately on land, and revenue became and remained the central preoccupation of policy, the more so because India’s role was to be that of a tributary province.”¹⁶⁸ As these authors maintain, there was a clear and intelligible connection between metropolitan and colonial notions of land, wealth, and power. Britons understood that the value of land underpinned the wealth of a society and the power of a state, not least because of the revenue collected from a given territory. Even trade and industry depended ultimately on the richness of the land. Thus the value of India could be appreciated by a British audience. Indeed, according to M.E. Yapp, support for the British presence in India and the benefits to be gained grew between 1830 and 1850.¹⁶⁹ This outlook, encouraged by the press, disposed the metropolitan public to view positively the moves toward war in Afghanistan.

The commercial and fiscal value of India was used to mobilize support in favor of British rule and development of the country and surrounding region. The press made a point to empha-

¹⁶⁸ Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 321.

¹⁶⁹ Yapp, *Strategies of British India*, 3.

size the profits as well as products flowing from India. The *Edinburgh Review* claimed that “many of our fellow-countrymen may care little about the friendship or hostility of the barbarous monarchs whose territories border with our Indian possessions; or whether the revenue of those possessions be wasted in unprofitable war, or employed to the best advantage in creating and extending the blessing of peace. But there are numbers who, if once thoroughly aware of their value, would not be so indifferent to openings for commercial enterprise, and to fields where nothing is wanting but the funds and energy of the British capitalists to ensure large and cheap returns of the most valuable products.”¹⁷⁰ The author suggests that many Britons were unaware of the stakes in the borderlands. This indifference would quickly turn to interest if they were aware of its commercial value. The potential profits to be made in this region should awaken British capitalists from their ignorance. In addition, the author presents the rulers of Central Asia as “barbarous.” This statement presents them as illiberal and unenlightened about the progress of civil societies and market economies. If the lands under their rule can be opened up, British capitalists can develop them. The *Edinburgh Review* goes on to claim that the “the agriculture, and the commerce of India, are both as yet in their infancy. There is no limit, at least none that will be reached for centuries, to her power of supplying the great staples.”¹⁷¹ India is presented as a source of great agricultural and commercial potential, likely to yield economic benefit for centuries. This long-term value raises the stakes of British control in the short-term.

The land revenue produced by India was also of critical importance to the greater British empire. After decades of expansion, a large portion of India was under either direct or indirect British control. These territories produced vast sums of revenue for the British. The *Edinburgh Review* informs its readers that “the territorial possessions of these forty-one, and other petty un-

¹⁷⁰ The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 328.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 329.

named states, are estimated to amount to 449,845 square miles: and their annual revenue is calculated at £12,500,000.”¹⁷² This source of revenue must be maintained and defended. In addition, by showing that territorial expansion was fiscally advantageous, it can be deduced that further expansion is beneficial. If the Indian government could add territory to their already massive holdings, the annual income would continue to increase. Therefore, the costs of invasion seem like a small price to pay for the anticipated benefits of security.

Asia presented a new location for European rivalries to be contested. British colonial and foreign policy in India and Central Asia were significantly influenced by the European balance of power.¹⁷³ Maintaining control of India was critical to ensuring that Britain did not lose ground in relation to any of its European rivals. Placing colonial policy within the language of European rivalry made it easily accessible to a metropolitan audience. It also significantly increased India’s strategic importance to Britain. The *Quarterly Review* presented the correlation between European and Asian politics when it explained that “the questions now pending between the British Government and the sovereigns and chiefs of the countries which intervene between the Russian frontier in Georgia and the north-west frontier of British India, derive their real importance from the relative positions of England and Russia. They are therefore not merely Asiatic questions, but are likewise essentially European.”¹⁷⁴ The importance of the interactions between the Indian government and local rulers was not limited to the region. Each of these relationships directly influenced the relational power between Britain and Russia. The zero sum nature of the balance of power made these relationships especially important. Every time a local ruler chose Russian influence in their territory, it reduced the overall power of Britain. Every

¹⁷² Ibid., 360.

¹⁷³ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 4.

¹⁷⁴ “Russia, Persia, England,” *Quarterly Review*, June 1839, 80.

action in both Europe and Asia altered the balance between these two powers. It Britain lost prestige in Asia; it would become progressively weaker in Europe. Maintaining control of India was critical, therefore, to Britain's power in Europe. Policy in the East and in the West was intertwined. This belief was echoed in the *Edinburgh Review*. It asserted that ignorance of Indian affairs "cannot last. India is rapidly acquiring commercial importance, which must command attention; and recent events have so intimately connected some of her political relations with those of Europe."¹⁷⁵ India was vital to British power both commercially and politically. Thus, its security and survival was of the utmost importance to both metropolitan and imperial actors.

4.4 The Imminent Threat

The press propagated the belief that British India faced an imminent and existential threat. However, this threat was not limited to a specific frontier or country. The press produced the anxiety that India was surrounded on all sides by hostile powers. It was also argued that the combination of these threats produced the strategic environment that the Indian government had to act within. According to the *Morning Chronicle*,

to duly appreciate the issue of the struggle, we must look still more closely at the dark combination of circumstances under the depressing gloom of which Lord AUCKLAND was obliged to choose his course of policy. On the one hand, Persia had been incited first to slight the counsel of our ambassador; then grossly to insult him; and finally, in spite of his remonstrances, to seize upon territory – affording an advanced *point d'appui* for the intrigues of Russia – in the direction of the north-western frontier. On the other side, the Courts of Nepal and Ava, smarting under humiliation and loss of possessions, to which they were severally subjected at the close of their former contest with the British power, assumed an extremely threatening aspect.¹⁷⁶

British India was encircled by hostile powers. This menacing reality was presented as the context that shaped Auckland's decision calculus prior to the invasion. He was not faced with mere-

¹⁷⁵ The Present State and Prospects of British India," *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 331.

¹⁷⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1839.

ly a hostile threat beyond the Indus, but on his southern and southeastern frontiers as well. The *Morning Chronicle* went on to explain that the “jealous powers upon our eastern and south-eastern frontiers had been taught, or had learned, that they possessed a natural ally in our powerful northern enemy; and that the more intelligent, at least, of the many discontented spirits which must necessarily exist in an empire held by such a tenure as that of India had begun to look fondly for the vanguard of that invincible army, before which their English rulers were to fly in terror to their ships.”¹⁷⁷ Not only was India threatened by Asian rivals, but there was the possibility that its hostile neighbors would join forces. The threat of encroaching enemies on every frontier was magnified by the threat of internal revolt. The newspaper contends that British control was contested by the local population, which would rise up if they knew an invading army was engaging British forces. The combination of these threats raised the specter of defeat and withdrawal from India.

The broad and severe nature of the threat was presented by other periodicals as well. The *Edinburgh Review* informed its readers of “the hostile attitudes assumed by the powers upon our north-eastern, eastern, and south-eastern frontiers, at the very time that the cloud was gathering most darkly in the north-west, in order that our readers might form an adequate conception both of the effect which such an apparent combination of enemies was calculated to produce upon the excitable minds of our native subjects, and of the circumstances under which it became necessary for Lord Auckland to choose his line of policy with regard to the affairs of Affghanistan and Persia.”¹⁷⁸ Like the piece in the *Morning Chronicle*, this article focuses on each of India’s hostile neighbors. It makes it clear that in order to gauge the importance and success of the Afghan policy, India must be placed in a larger regional context. Auckland did not make a decision with

¹⁷⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1839.

¹⁷⁸ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 334.

only Afghanistan and Persia in mind. Rather, he had to develop a strategy that would be effectual throughout South and Central Asia. This article also draws the reader's attention to the internal threat. The encroachment of any of these powers was likely to energize challenges among Britain's Indian subjects. Finally, this article makes the claim that it was "necessary" for Lord Auckland to make a decision. Due to the amalgamation of these different threats, some type of action had to be taken. Together, these arguments make it clear to the reader that the Indian government faced an extremely ominous situation, and that military force was the only adequate solution.

The press also exploited British anxiety about Islam. The fear of a Muslim force defeating the British in Asia was an easily recognizable and pressing concern in the metropole. According to Edward Said, "not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma."¹⁷⁹ Islam became the most threatening image of the *other* in the minds of Europeans, including the British. The British press utilized this fear in journalistic descriptions of the situation in India. The religious nature of the conflict became a central trope in several articles. The *Morning Chronicle* explained that Persian influence on India's frontiers would incite "the turbulent Mahomedan population of our large towns. The latter again, with their millions of brethren throughout the Peninsula, bearing towards their Christian masters the most intense religious animosity, exacerbated by the loss of that temporal domination over the fair provinces of India which we have wrested from them, were looking impatiently for the coming of the Persian monarch, with the allied or subjected chiefs of Affghanistan, to re-establish in pristine splendour the fading glories of

¹⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, 59.

ISLAM. Generally the most feverish excitement prevailed.”¹⁸⁰ The threat of Islam was internal and external due to the large Muslim population in India. If Indian Muslims united against the British, they would represent a formidable force. The author also suggests that the interreligious conflict has been a constant theme in Indian politics. The British gained control of their Indian possessions by defeating Muslim rulers. While Islam’s great days were believed to be in the past, they remained an inspiration to challengers in the present.

The threat is compounded by the perceived deep seated hatred that the Muslim population harbors against the British. If the combined Persian and Russian forces could reach the Indus, it was feared that the animosity of the Muslim population would violently explode. The *Edinburgh Review* informs its readers that “as long as they [the millions of Muslims of all classes in India] retain their present creed, we never can have any hold upon their affection. They hate us with all the intensity of combined political and religious animosity. They detest us as the subverters of their domination over the fair plains and wealthy cities of Hindostan: they detest us with all still greater cordiality as the Christian rulers of the followers of the last true Prophet. They regarded his [the Persian Shah] march upon India with the same fond aspirations which the Christians of Palestine and Syria must have breathed for the success of the monarchs who led the third crusade.”¹⁸¹ This article presents an especially threatening concern. It argues that the antipathy that existed between the Muslim population and the British is both ancient and permanent. This type of malice and resentment is used to justify action by the Indian government. The disagreements between these groups are not limited to political misunderstanding, but stems from a primordial hatred. The only way, apparently, to challenge this enemy is by force of arms. By alluding to the Crusades, events in faraway India are brought rhetorically closer to the famil-

¹⁸⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1839.

¹⁸¹ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 335.

iar historical and cultural world of the metropolitan audience. The Indian government's worries can be paralleled to an older European fear of Islam.

The next threat that is presented in these sources is the rising power and influence of Russia in Central Asia. It is feared that the Russian army enjoys higher prestige throughout the region than the British. An ascendant Russia is especially threatening to British control in India when viewed through the European balance of power paradigm familiar to the metropolitan audience. The *Quarterly Review* alerted its readers that "the Persian envoy at Kandahar had expatiated on the intimacy and the concert that existed between Persia and Russia, contrasting the high value of an alliance with these two powers with the comparative worthlessness of a connection with England and extolling the military power of Russia as superior to that of all other nations."¹⁸² It was believed that Persia was already little more than a Russian pawn. This article suggests that power was relative in Asia. An alliance with Britain is inconsequential opposed to the combined forces of Persia and Russia. Every time a local ruler entered willingly or unwillingly into a relationship with Russia, the threat to British India exponentially increased. This author notes Russian military prestige in the region. Rumors had begun to circulate about Russia's growing and mythically invincible army which the British believed were being spread throughout Central Asia. The *Edinburgh Review* contended that

of the military power of the Russians, the most extravagant notions were entertained. Wonderful things were asserted of the Oroos [Russians], particularly about their military deeds. Shumsodeen Khan, among other things, told the company that no fort could hold out against this people. The General-e-Oroos gave orders that fifty thousand men should be killed, and served out as rations! An old Affghan gentlemen in the audience [stated], "why then they are cannibals, and must have a larger army than Timour had.' We may be sure that such tales lose nothing of the marvelous as they travel towards the East."¹⁸³

¹⁸² "Russia, Persia, England," *Quarterly Review*, June 1839, 88.

¹⁸³ "The Present State and Prospects of British India," *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 335-336.

The Russians are seen as bloodthirsty and unstoppable. With rumors like these loose in the region, not just in Afghanistan but India as well, it is feared that native groups will join the Russians rather than suffer their brutality. These rumors had to be offset by stories of British strength and beneficence.

Finally, the British press confirmed the reality of the Russian peril. The actions of the Russian were no longer clandestine and their strategic aims were blatantly evident. The *Quarterly Review* informed its readers that “the concert of Persia and Russia in their proceedings in Affghanistan had ceased to be doubtful, and the hostile views towards England, with which the Russian agents were prosecuting this scheme of concerted action with Persia, had been exposed in the correspondence of Dost Mahommed Khan’s agent at the court of Persia with his master. The nature of these hostile views will be made more intelligible by the following letter from Captain Burnes.”¹⁸⁴ The *Quarterly Review* asserted its credibility as a source of information about distant developments by citing a letter from Alexander Burnes. The authenticity of these claims was not a matter of speculation. Rather, they came from what the Briton on the spot had witnessed. The potential of an impending conflict with Russia over India was no longer in question; it was now the reality that Britons at home had to accept. With the value of India established, and the imminence of a threat verified, immediate and decisive action was believed to be necessary.

4.5 The Call for Immediate and Decisive Action

The combination of external aggression and internal revolt prompted the Indian government to take action. The information provided to metropolitan audiences indicated a situation

¹⁸⁴ “Russia, Persia, England,” *Quarterly Review*, June 1839, 89.

where direct action was the only solution. Asia was represented as a combustible region, and one that required British management. According to James Hevia, “the theory and practice of security, in turn, constituted Asia as a problem, one that demanded and justified interventions of many kinds. Put another way, the British imperial security regime constituted Asia as an unstable terrain occupied by suspect populations.”¹⁸⁵ Together, the press as well as the government constructed a specific representation of Asia. The entire region was seen as an anarchic and violent space. It was believed that the subcontinent was inhabited by hostile and barbarous groups who were not to be trusted. The only way that these groups could be controlled was through direct military action. The popular press spread these notions throughout the metropole. It not only informed the domestic audience about the nature of the threat, but also argued that action was necessary to subdue it.

The necessity for action was immediately presented after the Indian Papers were laid before Parliament. The Indian Papers consisted of selected correspondence between the Indian government and both local rulers and East India Company Board of Directors. The *Morning Chronicle* praised Auckland and his actions almost immediately after these documents were received. On April 8, 1839, it asserted that “from the voluminous correspondence relating to the affairs of Affghanistan which we find amongst these papers, it is fully and incontrovertibly proved, not only that Russian emissaries were successfully intriguing in Persia and at Herat, but that they had actually entered into relations with DOST MAHOMMED, which rendered the decisive measure of LORD AUCKLAND one of imperative necessity.”¹⁸⁶ The journalist is making several suggestive arguments in this statement. First, they are claiming the factuality of their argument since it is informed by the Indian Papers. The colonial documents are presented as unbi-

¹⁸⁵ Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 251.

¹⁸⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, April 8, 1839.

ased and accurate. Second, the author claims that the hostile intentions of Russia had been proven by their actions. Their desire to challenge Britain in India was no longer speculative, but was a matter of certainty. Third, the Russians were no longer limited to influencing Persia. Their expanding power was impinging on India's main buffer state. Finally, and most importantly, the report asserts that Auckland's actions were a necessity. This article does not question whether other strategies could have been more beneficial. Even before the invasion was a military success, the *Morning Chronicle* was praising it as the only effective solution. This paper was not alone in complimenting the Indian government on its correct policy and decisive action.

Afghanistan was seen as a critical bulwark for the defence of India. In addition, it was feared that without immediate action, it would fall to Russian intrigue in the same way that Persia had. The deployment of the Army of the Indus was presented as the ideal means of maintaining an Afghan buffer. On April 14, 1839, the *Examiner* informed its readers that

France, for example, no longer looks with hateful or intriguing eyes towards British India – and Affghanistan, formidable once, is divided and weak. Still, however, in resistance to aggression from the West, lies now, as then, the most necessary policy of our Indian government; seeing that, in place of our old foes, the emissaries of Russia have been busy. We have lost Persia by their arts, and it is only by the sort of decision manifested by Lord Auckland in recent occurrences, that we can hope to recover strength in Affghanistan. The last-named state is the barrier left us, and a victory over the Chiefs of Candahar and Caubul – the purpose of the recent movement in aid of the restoration of their legitimate prince – would at once revive its resources, and enlist them on our side.¹⁸⁷

This paper places the defence of India in a larger historical context. British India had always been threatened by other powers. Although France no longer rivaled Britain, Russia had replaced it as a challenger for control of the subcontinent. Afghanistan is also no longer what it once was. The fractured nature of the polity is seen as a sign of weakness. Its present disunity prevents Afghanistan from serving as a blocking force against Russian advances. Nevertheless,

¹⁸⁷ "Affairs of India," *Examiner*, April 14, 1839.

its potential as a buffer state remains significant given the loss of Persia to Russian influence. This paper argues that Auckland's actions were the only hope of unifying Afghanistan and keeping it under British control. If the invasion was successful, then it was believed that Auckland had taken a critical step to ensuring the safety and stability of British India.

The specific strategic environment and the various events in Central Asia made prompt action seem necessary. The various rulers in Afghanistan had been playing Russia and Britain off against one another in order to achieve local aspirations. It was determined that Afghanistan had been in limbo for long enough. It was necessary for it to fall within either the Russian or the British camp. According to the *Monthly Review*, "the only effectual mode of meeting the impending danger, which, in fact, is only to be dreaded from Russia acting through Persia and Affghanistan, is by re-establishing Shah Shoojah-ool-Moolk as sovereign of the Affghans. It is clearly pointed out, we think, that the time as arrived when Affghanistan must either be subjected to the influence of Russia, or of Great Britain."¹⁸⁸ In order to maintain control of British India, it was vital that Afghanistan, if not Persia, remain outside of Russian control. The only suitable way to prevent that state of affairs was by placing Shah Shuja on the throne in Kabul. This action would ensure British, rather than Russian, influence over Afghanistan. It was suggested that now is the time for action. With Herat under siege and Russian emissaries in Kabul, the country was at serious risk of falling to Russia. The Indian government had to take action to turn back the Russians and shore up the British in the Afghan sector of India's borderland. The *Quarterly Review* echoed this sense of urgency. It affirmed that "it was surely high time to put an end to an intercourse which was secretly carried on with such intentions, and if the attempt to do so by negotiation should fail, there could be no doubt that the time was come when it was indispensable

¹⁸⁸ "The Relations and Policy of British India," *Monthly Review*, May 1839, 133.

to the security and tranquility of India to take whatever measures might be necessary to separate Affghanistan from the league which it was proposed to form against us.”¹⁸⁹ Due to the series of events in the region, action was exigently necessary. Action, however, was now synonymous with military force. With the failure of the Burnes mission, diplomatic options were seen as exhausted. After negotiations had failed, the *Quarterly Review* contends that resolute military force was now justified and necessary to ensure the survival of British India.

The usefulness of an unflinching response to the most ominous situation was meant to unify the various groups and voices in London. Regardless of political affiliation, it was suggested that all of England should rise and recognize the courageous response of Lord Auckland. The *Edinburgh Review* proclaimed that “whatever difference of opinion may exist in regard to the wisdom of the Governor-General’s views, all parties must unite in applauding the promptitude and vigour with which they were carried into execution.”¹⁹⁰ The journalist is proclaiming the benefits associated with decisive action. Through this statement, the metropolitan audience is being told that the only way to ensure the maintenance of imperial possessions is through unyielding action. Auckland had to make a decision based on his assessment of the ominous situation before him. The journal is justifying the means, while recognizing that the ends may not yet be settled policy in the eyes of the opposition in Parliament. As long as the British maintained imperial possessions, they had to be willing to take immediate action to maintain their control. After praising the decision to act, the press began praising the early results of the invasion.

¹⁸⁹ “Russia, Persia, England,” *Quarterly Review*, June 1839, 90.

¹⁹⁰ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 353.

4.6 The Spoils of War

The rapid success of the invasion was seen to advance British interests in India and Central Asia. The press consistently highlighted these spoils of war, showing the unquestionable benefit of military action in accomplishing British objectives. The war was praised as a way to reassert the prestige of the British army in both Asia and Europe. In its report, the *West Kent Guardian* informed its readership that “on Wednesday intelligence reached town of the signal victory gained by the army of the Indus under Sir John Keane, and of the triumphant success of its operations in Afghanistan. In these ‘piping times of peace’ the report of such glorious achievements is as startling as it is gratifying; it renews the fame of our arms in India, and forcible recalls to every state in Europe the recollections of the brilliant and enduring triumphs of British arms under Sir Arthur Wellesley, which so largely contributed to consolidate our power in the east.”¹⁹¹ This paper called its readers attention to several aspects of the military success. First, it highlighted the use of military force during a period that had been defined by diplomatic negotiations. British arms had been successfully employed to advance policy objectives. It seems to suggest that diplomacy is not the most effective form of statecraft. Next, it praised the Indian government for reasserting the power of the British military. By invading Afghanistan, the Indian government was able to showcase its capabilities to both Asian and European rivals. Third, this article made it clear that events in Asia can affect the balance of power in Europe. European competitors would certainly be made aware of this signal victory and forced to think twice before challenging Britain. Finally, it seems to suggest that violence was necessary for the establishment of British primacy in India. Together, these arguments further entrench the belief that the empire in Asia could only be maintained by force of arms.

¹⁹¹ “Glorious News from India – Triumph of the British Arms,” *West Kent Guardian*, November 2, 1839.

The fall of Ghazni was presented as critical to establishing the dominance of British arms. The *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia* recounted to its audience the events of the invasion and their overwhelming success.

Excepting the impediments offered by the climate, and the marauders, who vex every camp, the march of the troops from Scinde to Candahar was unopposed. A bloodless campaign would have been not only an inglorious one, but inefficient for the purpose of overawing the enemies of the king of Cabul, and of striking a salutary terror into the restless spirits in other quarters that were mediating mischief against our Indian territories; and, accordingly, a fortress, one of the strongest in Asia, defended by a brave and numerous garrison, fell into the hands of our gallant army in a manner which may well impress the people of the East with a notion of the invincibility of our arms.¹⁹²

This article corroborates the belief that the invasion of Afghanistan was not meant to strictly establish Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul. The British sought an opportunity to showcase the strength of their military forces in the East. The fortress of Ghazni served as the ideal location for establishing military prestige. The importance of military prestige was not only understood by imperial officials. It was discussed, and its importance recognized, in unofficial sources as well. The overwhelming victory at Ghazi not only asserted British power in Central Asia. It also served to incite patriotic pride in the British public. It was not an unknown and unsung colonial army that defeated the Afghans, but “our gallant army.” The British public was able to feel as though they were a part of this awe inspiring success. Finally, this engagement demonstrated the hopelessness of challenging the British on the battlefield. The importance of the pedagogy of violence was understood at home as well as abroad.

It was believed that military success would teach a lesson to all hostile powers and would make India cheaper to maintain. The *West Kent Guardian* celebrated the army and the potential effects of its success in the region. It stressed that the Army of the Indus’s “career has been as

¹⁹² “Review of Eastern Affairs: Number 25,” *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia* 31 (January – April 1840): 1.

brilliant as it was brief, and renews the salutary lessons formerly taught Indian chiefs and governments – that neither fortresses nor armies can resist successfully the force of British skill, British discipline, and British gallantry.”¹⁹³ The pedagogy of violence would ensure that local rulers would not contest British rule. Through the astoundingly quick and decisive victory, the Indian army had taught a clear lesson. It demonstrated that there was no force in the region that could humble British power. It was hoped that this success would make future operations cheaper and more manageable. This theory was evident in the *Era*'s coverage and expectations about the next proposed ventures. The author reported that “two new expeditions were contemplated and in preparation – the one against Saudpore, the other against Kurnaul. The success of the British army in Affghanistan, the preparations for attacking the two cities, just mentioned, and the recent disposition of the Rajah of Sattara, will render more manageable and mild the most untractable enemies.”¹⁹⁴ The successful invasion was expected to have immediate effects on imperial policy. The rulers of Saudpore and Kurnaul were expected to bow to British demands before force had to be applied. They had already witnessed the impossibility of challenging the Indian army. The Afghan invasion was presented as an economical action. It was relatively cheap, and it was expected to produce significant benefits.

The comparative advantage of invading Afghanistan was presented in multiple papers. Even though the invasion and subsequent occupation was costly, India's normal revenue was sufficient to pay for it. In addition, they would limit the need to invest large sums of money to maintain control in the future. The *Morning Chronicle* reported that “the entire success, as respects the affairs of Affghanistan and Persia, of this bold and sagacious line of policy, by which an insuperable barrier has been raised against any ambitious designs on the part of Russia, is al-

¹⁹³ “Glorious News from India – Triumph of the British Arms,” *West Kent Guardian*, November 2, 1839.

¹⁹⁴ “Capture of Ghizny by Storm,” *Era*, November 3, 1839.

ready known to the public. This result has been achieved by means of the ordinary revenue of the state without opening a loan. It is expected that our difference with Nepal and Ava, intimated, as those courts must be, by our success beyond the Indus, will be settled without necessity for a resource to arms.”¹⁹⁵ The *Edinburgh Review* corroborated this practical cost-benefit analysis. It argued that should the Indian government have failed to act, that “it would have damaged us in the estimation of our own people, and our immediate neighbors, to a degree which no mere pecuniary saving could compensate. And the expense of the expedition, and the subsequent occupation of Afghanistan, has hitherto been met from the ordinary revenue, without borrowing.”¹⁹⁶

Taken together, these two articles present several crucial arguments to understanding the perceived benefits of the war. First, both articles claim that the cost of war had been met by the normal revenue of India. The invasion and occupation were not presented as a financial burden on the metropole. Second, they suggested that the war had significantly shaped the minds of local rulers. They were forced to recognize the strength of British arms. This newly acquired respect, it was hoped, would limit future military expenditures. The Indian government would no longer need to utilize military force to achieve its desired objectives. The successful invasion of Afghanistan would force local rulers to submit to British demands before force had to be mobilized. Thus the strategic benefits gained through the war greatly outweighed the financial cost. The imperial policy enacted by the Indian government had been successfully proven to be beneficial and necessary.

¹⁹⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1839.

¹⁹⁶ “The Present State and Prospects of British India,” *Edinburgh Review*, July 1840, 341.

4.7 Conclusion

Prior to deploying the Army of the Indus, the Indian government had successfully securitized British India in the minds of many parliamentarians and journalists. However, the legitimacy of the invasion was enhanced by the extent that the wider metropolitan public accepted its necessity and its effectuality. The actions of the Indian government were justified in the journalistic coverage of the war. In reviewing the major journals and newspapers from the period, it becomes increasingly evident that the invasion was presented to the public as both necessary and beneficial. British India was seen as an important source of imperial wealth and worth defending even by war. It was also believed that there was a clear and imminent threat to these possessions. Finally, the costs of war were shown to be inconsequential in comparison to the benefits obtained by timely and resolute action. Through the imagery of both external rivalries and internal turmoil, the Indian government was able to successfully securitize British India and justify the expansion of British primacy beyond the Indus.

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

When every one is dead the Great Game is finished. Not before.

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*

The First Anglo-Afghan War did not end with Shah Shuja's return to the throne of Kabul. As Kipling suggests in his novel *Kim*, the geopolitical competition in Central Asia did not consist of limited relatively bloodless matches. It was, rather, a long-running engagement, that inflicted significant suffering upon all of its players and could only end when "every one is dead."¹⁹⁷ After the immediate success of the invasion, the Indian government set up a residence in Kabul supported by a moderate-sized Indian army contingent. Although the country seemed to be relatively quiet during the initial stages of the residency, all of this would quickly change. In 1841, the British began to experience serious resistance to their presence in the country. Eventually, this resistance would explode into a full-fledged insurgency. After the deaths of Alexander Burnes and William Macnaghten, the British decided that they had no other alternative but to retreat from Kabul. On January 1, 1842, the entirety of the British mission to Kabul, both soldiers and camp followers, evacuated their cantonment and set out for the stronghold at Jalalabad. Only Dr. William Brydon would survive the entire march and make it safely to the fortress. Some 16,000 others perished.¹⁹⁸ The failure in Kabul crushed British military and diplomatic prestige throughout the region. The devastation caused by the war did not end there however.

In order to salvage the British position in the region, the new governor-general of India, Lord Ellenborough launched the "Army of Retribution." This expeditionary force sought to reassert British power by striking back at the Afghans rather than re-occupying the country. In the

¹⁹⁷ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1922), 353.

¹⁹⁸ Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 268.

spring of 1842, the Army of Retribution forced the Khyber Pass and marched on Kabul. After rescuing the British hostages and punishing the Afghans held responsible for the revolt, the force exacted one final grand measure to communicate Britain's message. They burned the bazaar in Kabul, the largest marketplace in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹ The Army of Retribution accomplished their objective by employing the most gruesome practices imaginable. This act of collective punishment precipitated something even worse. According to historian William Dalrymple, "the dynamiting of the great bazaar unleashed in Kabul a wave of rapes, pillage, and murder."²⁰⁰ Once the Army of Retribution had inflicted its punishment on Afghanistan, the force withdrew and returned to India. What they left behind was a scene of devastation remembered by Britons and Afghans:

at sunrise on 12 October 1842, the British lowered the Union Jack on the Bala Hisar, and, in the words of the Reverend I.N. Allen, 'turned our backs on the scene of former disgrace and present outrage – a melancholy and disgraceful scene.' Behind them, Neville Chamberlain could see 'the whole face of the sky was red with flames' and the last remaining quarters of Kabul still standing – all that left of the city of gardens which Burnes had once thought the most beautiful in the region – well on their way to becoming smoldering wreck. 'Ruin and revenge had uprooted families and dwellings,' wrote Munshi Abdul Karim, 'few distinguished citizens were left; the bazaars had been pulled down; open spaces were heaped with corpses and filth and stench polluted the air. Once fine gardens were now the haunt of scavengers and owls: wretched beggars were left scrambling in the dust.'²⁰¹

The British left Kabul, and Afghanistan, in ruins. Of course, the bazaar could be rebuilt and reopened. However, the destruction went deeper than the damage done to physical infrastructure.

The war had major and long lasting political and economic effects for Afghanistan. According to Hopkins, "rebuffed, in their strategic designs, the British moved from integrating Af-

¹⁹⁹ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 70.

²⁰⁰ William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-1842* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2013), 410.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 414.

ghanistan into their imperial system as a buffer state to isolating and excluding it.”²⁰² He goes on to explain that “as European empires expanded through the nineteenth century, and the modern global order which they represented evolved and came to be more firmly established, more and more areas previously central to older regional systems were marginalized.”²⁰³ Having failed to establish influence in the country, the British actively sought to quarantine Afghanistan. It was excluded from the commercial networks developed by the British and other empires over the course of the nineteenth century. Its economic and political power stagnated due to its isolation. The war had long-enduring results that still shape, at least in part, the current situation in the country.

The framework of securitization can provide historians with new and important insights about the First Anglo-Afghan War. It suggests that imperial policy and practices were not innocent. Rather, “defining a menace is a normative political act. In other words, those who define a threat can be held accountable, as threats are also the products of their entrepreneurship.”²⁰⁴ The imperial practices that left thousands of people dead and Afghanistan in a state of absolute ruin were not self-generated, nor were they preordained to take place. They were rather the creation of imperial actors. Due to their disastrous effects, it is vital to understand how they were produced, justified, and enacted. Securitization offers the ability to study not only the consequences of these decisions, but how they were constructed and legitimized.

By analyzing the First Anglo-Afghan War through the lens of securitization, it becomes clear that imperial officials claimed the right to act in the absence of an informed government and public in the metropole. London’s unfamiliarity with the diplomatic and military stakes of

²⁰² Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan*, 168.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 170.

²⁰⁴ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, xiii.

Central Asia allowed the Indian government to construct a specific narrative that was conducive to justifying their political objectives and military actions. Only by actively engaging in the distant affairs of imperial borderlands could the metropole hope to understand the claims made by imperial officials and question their validity and implications. David Urquhart, the former secretary of embassy at Constantinople and future member of Parliament, observed the lack of knowledge in the metropole, and commented upon its devastating ramifications. He asserts that

in the year 1838 England was unable to detect the preposterousness of the proposition of the similarity of interests of England and of Russia. Therefore, throughout the country, in that year, we have the means of knowing that no one could detect a very simple falsehood, or that none could resist a very dangerous crime – that no one could reason to an evident conclusion, or that no one took interest in the gravest interest of the state. There is, therefore, nothing in this proposition preposterous; but what belongs to each subject of the British Crown, and whatever in the transaction is criminal, rests now on the shoulders of each individual member of the state.²⁰⁵

Urquhart was a very complicated protagonist, famous in historical retrospect as a Russophobe.²⁰⁶

His views cannot be taken without question, any more than those of other political actors in Britain or India. Nevertheless, he does call attention to the high stakes of empire. Without being properly informed about the situation in Central Asia and India, the British populace was unable to recognize the unforgiving political realities in the region. This failure made Britons and not just parliamentarians or officials, responsible to some degree for what transpired in Afghanistan.

The success of a *securitizing move* is dependent upon the *empowering audience* accepting it and providing the *securitizing actor* with the authority to take action. In line with Urquhart and Balzacq, the general populace has an obligation to remain informed and concerned about foreign policy. If this was true in 1830s Britain, when aristocratic elite still governed the nation and the

²⁰⁵ David Urquhart, *Diplomatic Transactions in Central Asia from 1834 to 1839* (London: Thomas Brettell, 1841), 222.

²⁰⁶ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent Over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958).

empire and a male middle-class electorate had only just been enfranchised, it is all the more true in the democratic and globalizing conditions of today. Only through education, information, and discussion will ordinary citizens be able to determine when a referent subject warrants a response, or when it is a false bogey. “Fallacy is the magician’s spell, - truth is the talisman that sets his victim free.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Urquhart, *Diplomatic Transactions in Central Asia.*, 225.

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GLOSSARY

Authoritative Discourse: “An authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it we encounter it with its authority already fused to it its authority was already *acknowledged* in the past. It is a *prior* discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain.”²⁰⁸

Discourse: “A set of ideas and practices which, taken together, organize both the way a society defines truths about itself and the way it deploys social power.”²⁰⁹

Discourse Analysis: “The use of discourse analysis by the sociological securitization conforms, if tacitly to the tradition of *critical discourse analysis*. In many ways, discourse analysis has affinities with Foucault’s insistence on how ‘discourse actively structures the social space within which actors act, through the constitution of concepts, objects, and subject positions.’ Researchers who dwell on this perspective focus on dialogical structures which are nested in power relations. In general, critical approach to discourse will use a diverse body of data. The variety of data and the focus of analysis point to the insight that securitization can reside in practices other than words.”²¹⁰

Dispositif: “It is a network established between a heterogeneous set of elements such as discourses, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, buildings and institutions. Second, an apparatus (dispositif) always has a clear strategic purpose and is always a part of a power relationship. Lastly, the apparatus appears at the ‘intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge.’”²¹¹

Empowering Audience: “The audience which a) has a direct causal connection with the issue; and b) has the ability to enable the securitizing actor to adopt measures in order to tackle the threat.”²¹²

Functional Actors: “Actors who affect the dynamics of a sector. Without being the referent object or the actor calling for security on behalf of the referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security.”²¹³

Referent Object: “Things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival”²¹⁴

Referent Subject: Things that are seen to be existentially threatening to the referent object.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 342.

²⁰⁹ Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 24.

²¹⁰ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 41.

²¹¹ Hevia, *The Imperial Security State*, 7.

²¹² Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 9.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

²¹⁴ Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 36

²¹⁵ Balzacq, *Securitization Theory*, 36.

Securitization: “An articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor’s reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development”²¹⁶

Securitizing Actor: “Actors who securitize issues by declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened”²¹⁷

Securitizing Move: “A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object”²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 36

²¹⁸ Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, *Security*, 25.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1798: Napoleon invades Egypt
- 1802: Combined British and Ottoman forces defeat France in Egypt
- 1809: British sign defensive treaty with Ranjit Singh
- 1812: France invades Russia
- 1813: Treaty of Gulistan (Russia gains 250 miles of Persian territory)
- March 30, 1814: Russian forces enter Paris
- 1814: Congress of Vienna
- 1818-1826: Afghan civil war between the Saddozai and Barakzai
- 1825-1828: Russo-Persian War
- 1826: Dost Mohammad Khan takes control of Kabul
- 1828-1829: Russo-Ottoman War
- 1831: Mohammed Ali leads Egyptian Revolt against Ottoman control
- February 20, 1833: Russian fleet arrives in Constantinople in support of Ottoman Sultan
- 1834: Shah Shuja attempt to reclaim the throne defeated by Dost Mohammad Khan at Kandahar
- October 1835: Dost Mohammed Khan requests Russian support against Ranjit Singh
- September 20, 1837: Captain Burnes sets up commercial mission in Kabul
- November 23, 1837: Persia attacks Herat with Russian backing
- December 24, 1837: Captain Vitkevich arrives in Kabul
- January 20, 1838: Lord Auckland refuses to support Dost Mohammad Khan's claim to Peshawar
- April 21, 1838: Dost Mohammed Khan receives Vitkevich at Bala Hisar
- April 27, 1838: Burnes has final meeting with Dost Mohammed Khan
- May 22, 1838: Auckland alerts EIC Secret Committee of his intentions to invade Afghanistan
- June 19, 1838: British troops land at Kharg Island
- June 1838: Tripartite Treaty signed between British, Ranjit Singh, and Shah Shuja
- September 1838: Persia lifts siege on Herat
- October 1, 1838: Auckland issues "Simla Manifesto"
- October 6-7, 1838: British Cabinet unanimously approves Afghan war
- November 1838: The Army of the Indus sets off from the Punjab
- February 5, 1839: First official announcement of the invasion in Parliament
- March 1839: Army of the Indus passes through the Bolan Pass
- March 27, 1839: Indian Papers on Afghanistan ordered
- April 25, 1839: Army of the Indus enters Kandahar
- July 22, 1839: Battle of Ghazni
- August 7, 1839: Shah Shuja enters Kabul
- January 6, 1842: British retreat from Kabul
- April 5, 1842: Army of Retribution assembled and marches on the Khyber Pass
- October 12, 1842: Army of Retribution withdraws from Kabul