

# THE GREAT GAME

## (21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY)

\$ 1,007,000,000,000 (2016)  
 2,350 US KIA  
 20,092 US WIA  
 138,000 PTSD  
 (Now observer status)

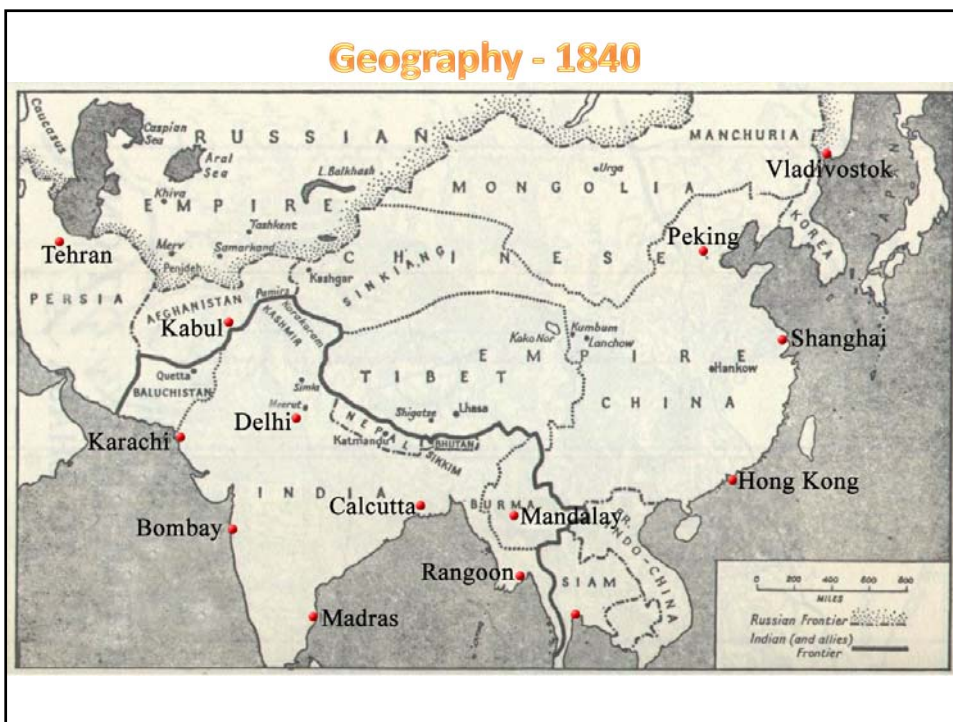
404 UK KIA  
 49 non-combat  
 2,187 WIA



### PLAYERS, 2018

- Cat 1. On borders
  - Cat 2. Muslim
  - Cat 3. \$Majors
  - Cat 4. \$Other
  - Cat 5. All Others
- 41 KIA  
 261 WIA

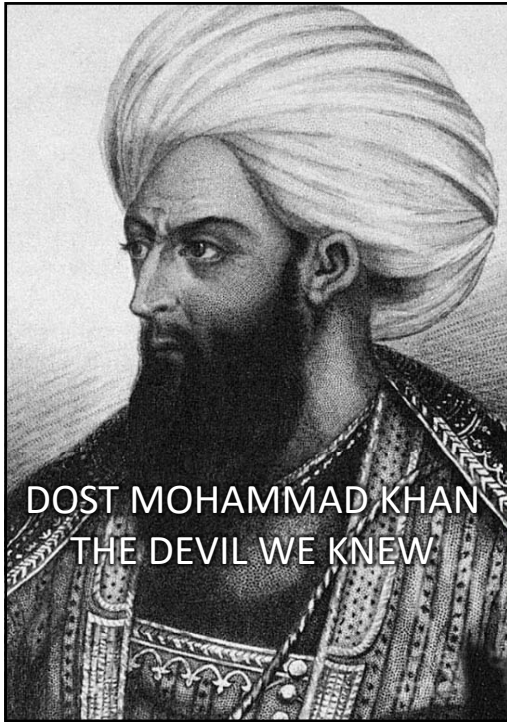
## Geography - 1840



## Political background to the 1<sup>st</sup> Anglo-Afghan War

- Buffer state Afghanistan lay in a strategic location in Central Asia, between Russia (north), British India (south), China (east), and Iran (west).
- Russia reached Bukhara, extending its influence in Central Asia to the khanate of Bukhara.
- British feared the growth of Russian power and supported certain factions of the Kabul government to gain influence and make the Afghans give up southern Pashtun lands to the Sikhs.
- 1834 - Afghan emir, Shah Shuja Durrani had no support among Afghans and Dost Mohammad Barakzai seized power .
- The new emir, Dost Mohammad, demanded British support against Sikhs to regain Pashtun lands in exchange for the defiance of Russian influence. Upon British refusal, Dost Mohammad began (show) negotiations with the Russians.
- 1838 – The British East India Company feared increased Russian influence, even though Dost had rebuffed several Russian overtures. Lord Auckland tried to force Afghan foreign policy, but Dost demurred.
- Alexander Burnes advised support of Dost, but Lord Auckland followed the advice of William Hay Macnaghten to forcibly reinstate Shah Shuja.

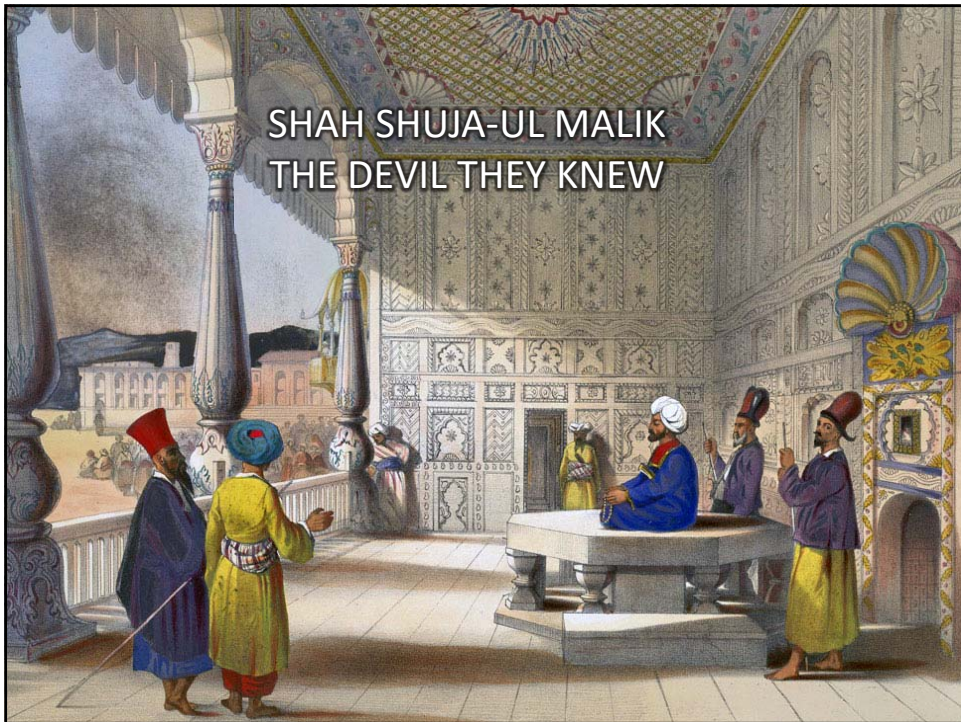




DOST MOHAMMAD KHAN  
THE DEVIL WE KNEW



PRINCE AKBAR KHAN  
THE SMILING ASSASSIN



SHAH SHUJA-UL MALIK  
THE DEVIL THEY KNEW



## The British East India Company



- December 31, 1600, the East India Company, chartered by Queen Elizabeth I.
- February 1601, ships sailed looking for spices in present-day Indonesia; after conflicts with Dutch and Portuguese traders, they focused on the subcontinent.
- Trading on the coasts, they found they had to hire their own armies.
- As the Mogul Empire collapsed, Persians, Afghans and French entered India.
- 1757, Battle of Plassey, British defeated Indian Army backed by France.
- 1773, alarmed by corruption, British government appointed Governor-General.
- 1799, invasion and acquisition of Mysore.
- 1803, the EIC private army of 260,000 was twice the size of the British Army.
- 1833, *Government of India Act* made East India Company *de facto* government.
- **1839-42, First Anglo-Afghan War.**
- 1840s, doctrine of lapse, British took land of Indian ruler who was incompetent or died without an heir.
- 1857, Sepoy Mutiny (Enfield cartridge paper coated with cow or pig grease).
- 1858, new *Government of India Act* dissolved company, declared India would be governed by the crown (1876, Queen Victoria declared Empress of India).

## The First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-1842

### Belligerents

British Empire  
 British East India Company

Emirate of Afghanistan

### Commanders and leaders

William Hay Macnaughten†, British Envoy to Kabul  
 Sir Alexander Burnes†, 2IC to British Envoy  
 LTG John Keane, CinC (1), Army of the Indus (AOI)  
 LTG Sir Willoughby Cotton, CinC (2), AOI  
 MG William Elphinstone, CinC (3), AOI, (POW) †  
 COL Robert Sale, 1<sup>st</sup> Bengal Brigade  
 MG Sir George Pollock, Relief Force from Peshawar  
 BG William Nott, Relief Force from Kandahar  
 Shah Shujah Durrani †

Dost Mohammad Khan (POW)  
 Akbar Khan  
 Tribal chieftains

"We have men and we have rocks in plenty, but we have nothing else"

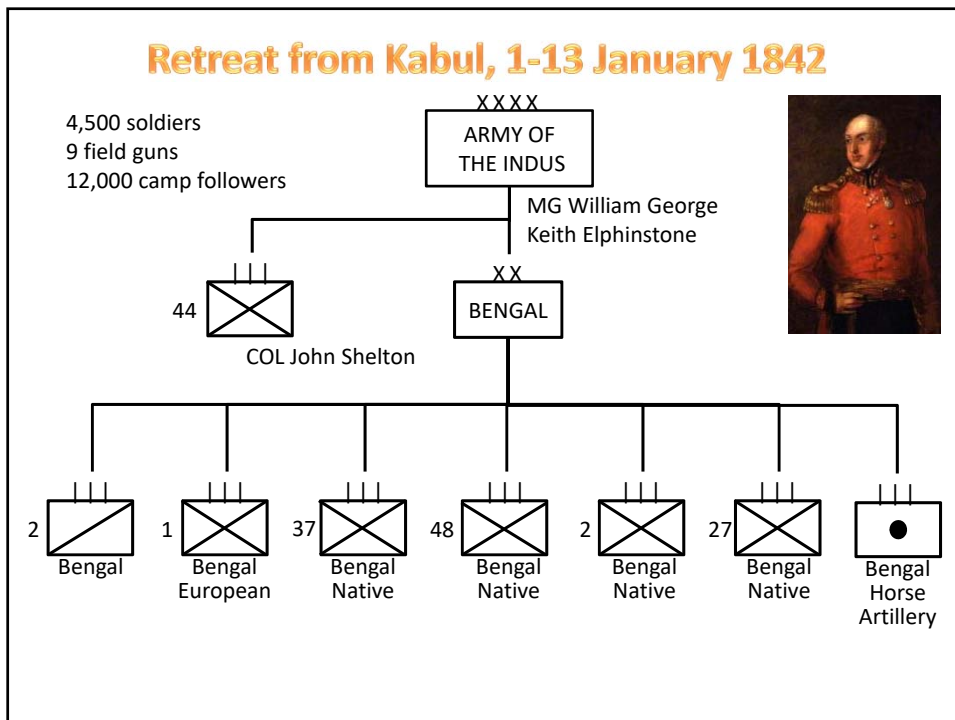
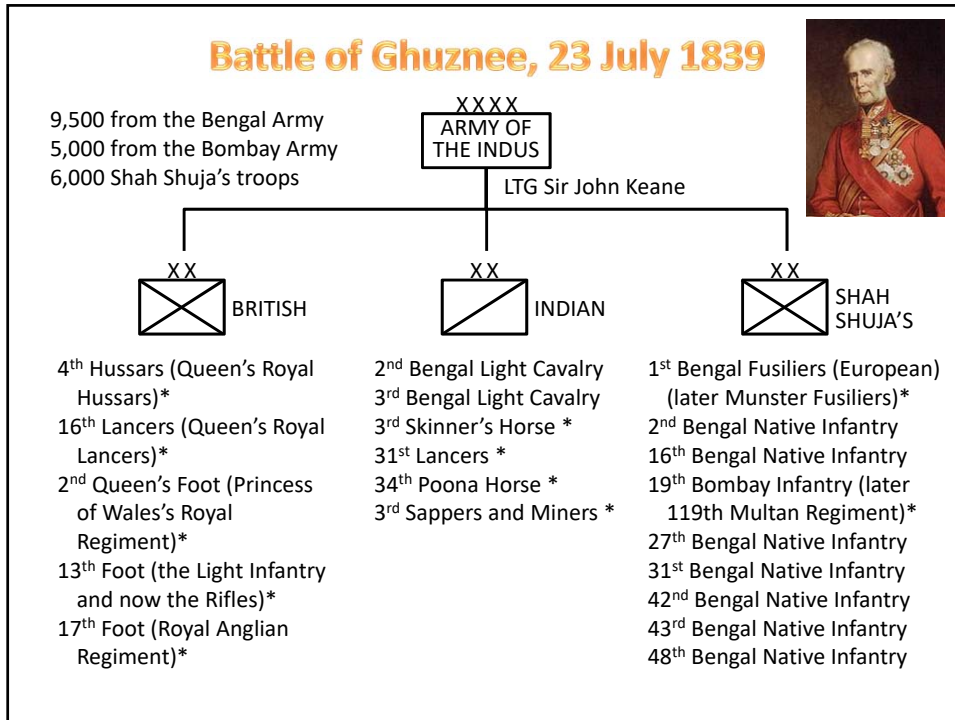
### Combatants

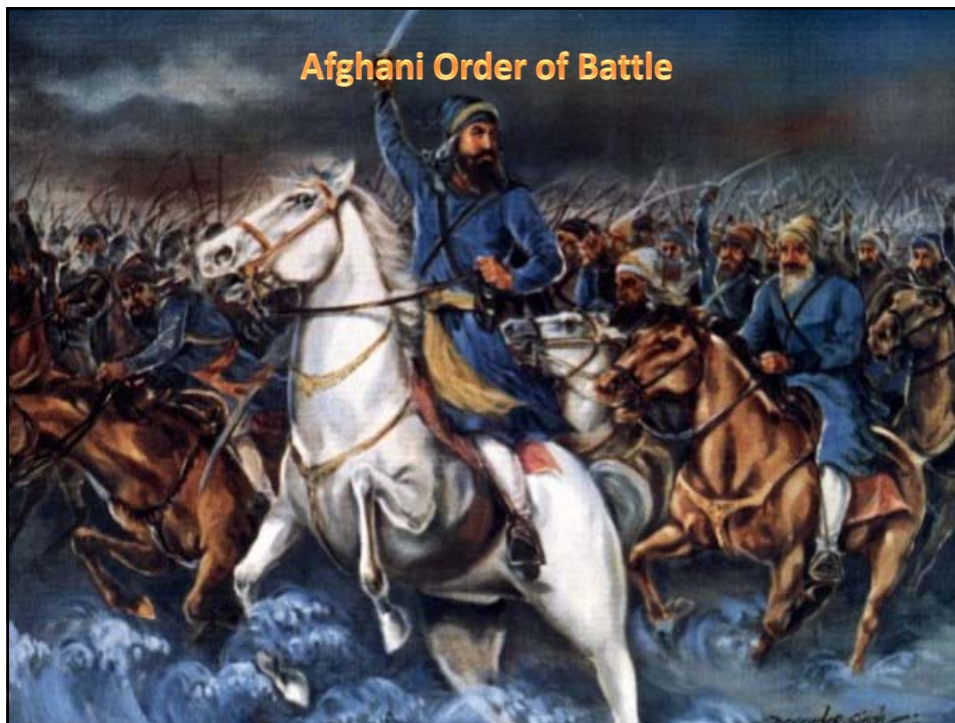
Grand Army of the Indus

- The Bombay Division, 5,600 men
- The Bengal Division, 9,500 men
- 6,000 Indian mercenaries under Shah Shuja
- 38,000 camp followers
- 30,000 camels
- Residual Kabul garrison 4,500 troops (690 European and 3,810 Indian) and 12,000 civilian camp followers
- MG Pollock, 8,000 men in three columns
- BG Nott,

Feudal system, no standing army. When Emir called upon them, tribal chiefs contributed up to 30,000 fighting men.

- Pashtuns
- Tajiks
- Uzbeks
- Hazaras (Shiites)





### **British Objectives in Afghanistan – April 1841**

Per the Auckland Papers in the British Museum:

- Continue to hold the main cities of Afghanistan in strength
- Restrain Shah Shujah from territorial expansion
- Leave independent tribes to themselves where possible
- Strive to keep Herat safe from Persian aggression without occupying the city while Yar Mohammed was alive
- Keep a strong force in Afghanistan while helping to build a genuine Afghan army
- Avoid direct interference in internal affairs while giving advice tactfully to prevent oppression and correct abuses

### British Annualised Costs in Afghanistan

● British contingent	£500,000
● Political expenses (incl. Shah's forces)	<u>£500,000</u>
British commitment (1 crore per year):	£1,000,000
● Extra allowances for Indian troops outside India	£100,000
● Extra commissariat charges	£250,000
● Additional expenses in Sind	£80,000
● Maintain steam flotilla on Indus River	£30,000
Extraordinary deficit to end April 1840 (1-1/2 crore)	£1,250,000*
Estimated deficit, April 1840 to April 1841	£1,250,000

\* A bureaucrat wrote that he believed the actual deficit to be much higher, but that Auckland justified the figure based on the projected April 1841 estimate.



I see many difficulties ahead, but none as difficult as that of finance which weighs with seriousness and anxiety upon my mind.

George Eden, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, 1836-42.

Money, money, money is our first, are a second and our last want. How long we can continue to feed you at your present rate of expenditure I know not.

John Russel Colvin, Private Secretary to Lord Auckland, to his friend Macnaghten.

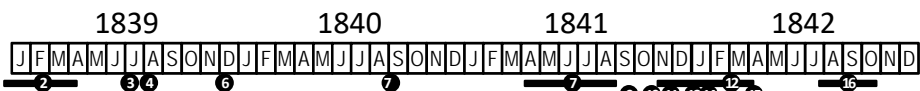




## Meanwhile, elsewhere in the Empire

- Punjab was in turmoil following deaths of Maharajas Ranjit Singh 27 June 1839 (illness) and Kharak Singh 5 Nov 1840 (poison), threatening access to Afghanistan through Peshawar.
- On 9 February 1841, Major Todd, Macnaghten's military/ political secretary, withdrew the Herat mission to Kandahar without authorisation after 18 months of fruitless negotiation, and was sacked in anger by Lord Auckland.
- First Opium War (1839-1842) in China. Qing Emperor banned opium trade and confiscated 20,000 chests (1,210 tons) of opium in April-May 1839. John Company raised troops for war with China (2 regiments plus).
- The Hudson's Bay Company was soon to lose its monopoly in Western America (U.S.) due to the Oregon Trail.

## First Anglo-Afghan War 1839-1842



- 1 Dosh Muhammad Khan deposed 2 August 1839; exiled Nov.
- 2 Invasion, December 1938-25 April 1839 (Kandahar)
- 3 Battle of Ghazni (Ghuznee), 23 July 1839
- 4 Shah Shuja assumes power in Kabul, 7 August 1839.
- 5 Macnaughton sends all but 8,000 troops home.
- 6 Macnaughton allows in British dependents.
- 7 MAJ Clifford turns back from relief of Hanan, 1 Sep.
- 8 New govt reduces funds to Afghanistan warlords.
- 9 Sales ambushed between Kabul / Jalalabad, 105 KIA
- 10 Sir Alexander Burnes murdered in Kabul, 2 Nov. 1841
- 11 Uprising. Macnaughton murdered in Kabul, 23 December 1841
- 12 Jalalabad besieged, Nov 1841-April 1842. Relief by Pollock.
- 13 Retreat from Kabul, 1-6 January 1842. Hostages kept at Bamian.
- 14 Battle of Gandamak, 13<sup>th</sup> January 1842
- 15 Shah Shuja assassinated, 5 April 1842.
- 16 India sent two punitive armies (Nott and Pollock) (Aug-Oct 1842)
- 17 Kabul reached on 15 September 1842.
- 18 Dosh Muhammad Khan returns from exile/rethroned.







### In the beginning

- Political officer Sir Alexander Burnes negotiated safe passage for the invading army through the Bolan Pass in March 1839.
- It is understood that a healthy bribe was paid. Burnes believed that a healthy bribe could ameliorate every serious political problem.
- In March 1839, a British army of 20,000 plus 38,000 camp followers crossed the Bolan Pass.

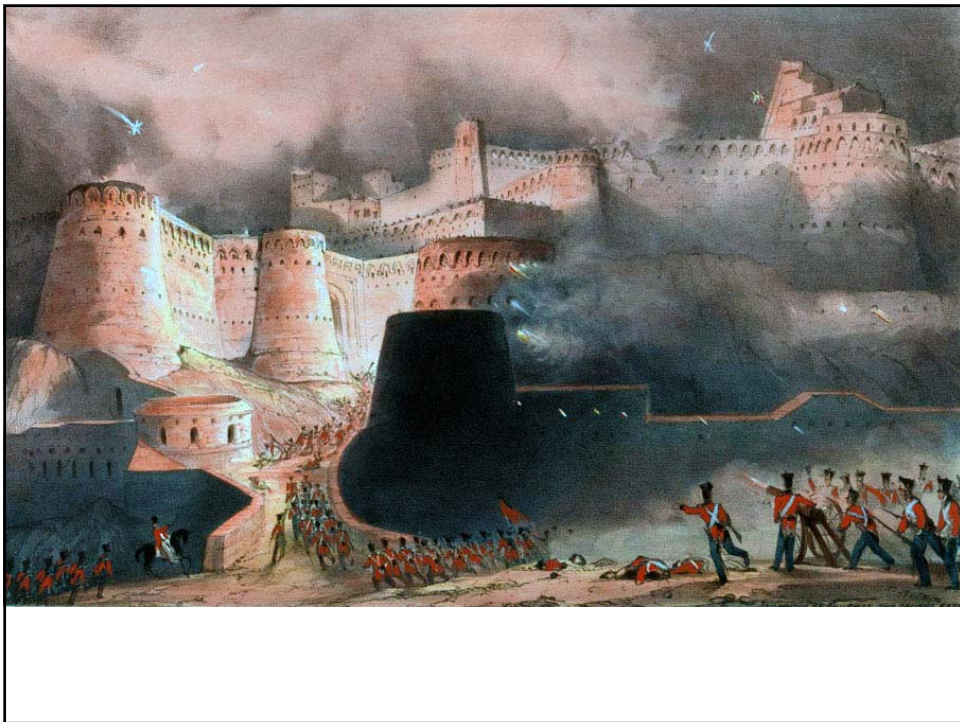


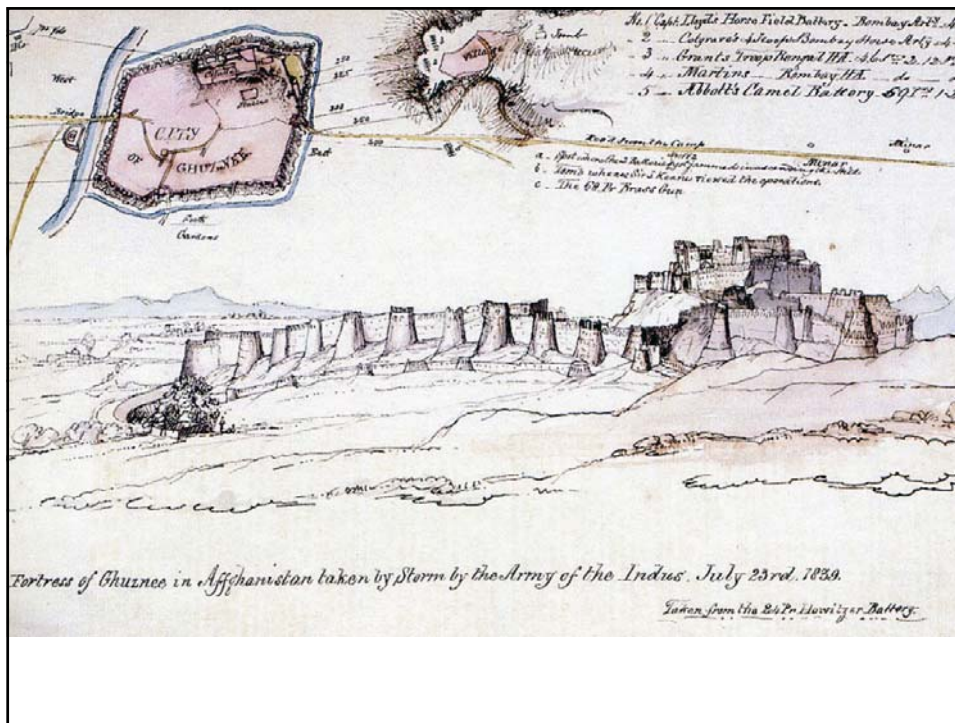
### Fall of Kandahar, 23 April 1839

### Fortress of Ghazni (Ghuznee), 22 July 1839

- The impregnable fortress of Ghazni fell in a surprise attack. British suffered 200 KIA and WIA, and Afghans 500 KIA and many WIA.

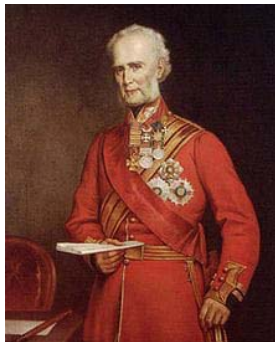




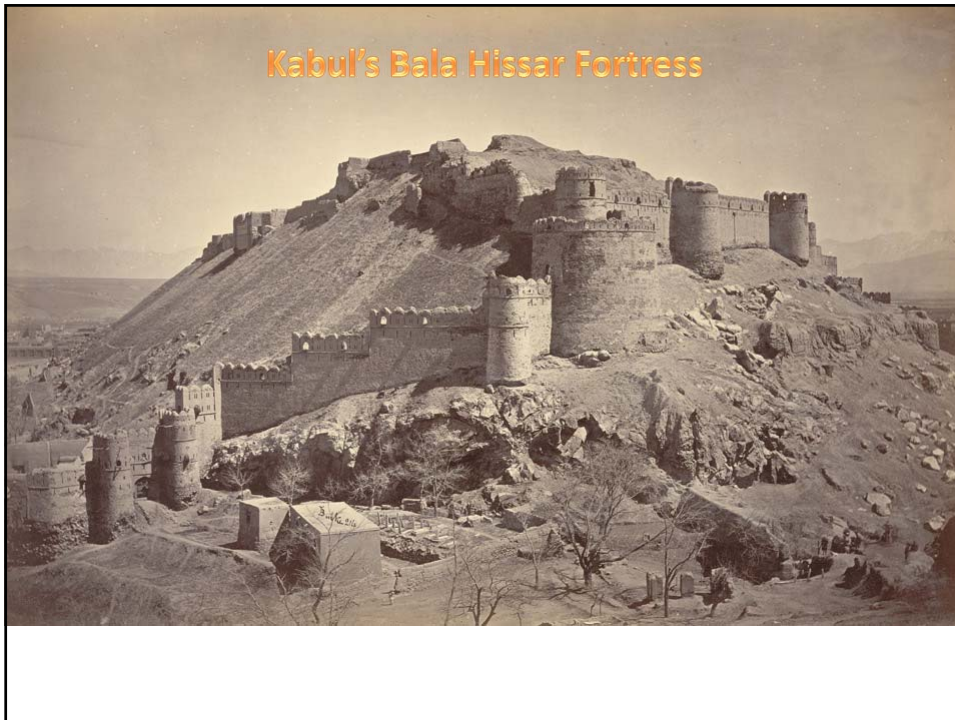


### 1839-1840

- 6-7 August 1839 – Kabul fell without a fight. Dost Mohammad fled to the Hindu Kush.
- 7 August 1839 – British reach Kabul and enthrone the cruel and vindictive Shah Shurja (right). He established a court in the Bala Hissar fortress in Kabul.



- November 1839 – newly minted “Earl of Keane” LTG Keane (left) and his troops leave Afghanistan, believing their “mission accomplished”.
- General Sir Willoughby Cotton, who has taken over as CinC, soon follows suit.



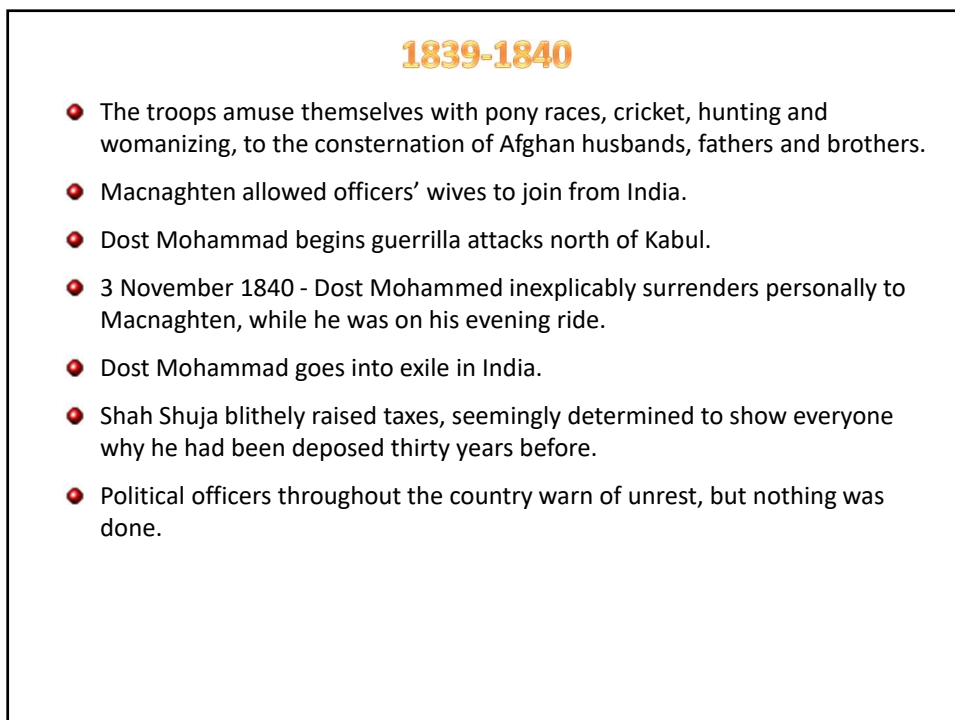
### **Famous (infamous) Bala Hissar Fortress**

Walls 20 feet (6.1m) high and 12 feet (3.7m) deep; consists of two parts:

- Lower part contains stables, barracks and three royal palaces
- Upper part houses armory and the dungeon of Kabul ("Black Pit")



It will see much action in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880), which might not have been necessary if it had been used in the First.





### 1839-1840

- In March 1839, a British army of 20,000 plus 38,000 camp followers crossed the Bolan Pass and took Kandahar on 25 April.
- 22 July 1839 - the impregnable fortress of Ghazni fell in a surprise attack. British suffered 200 KIA and WIA, and Afghans 500 KIA and many WIA.
- 6-7 August 1839 – Kabul fell without a fight. Shah Shuja was proclaimed emir and established a court in the Bala Hissar fortress in Kabul. Dost Mohammad finds refuge in the Hindu Kush.
- 6 August 1839 – Kabul falls without a battle.
- 7 August 1839 – British reach Kabul and enthrone the cruel and vindictive Shah Shurja.
- November 1839 – LTG Keane and his troops leave Afghanistan.
- General Cotton, now CinC, follows suit.
- The now “headless” military decides to leave the cramped Bala Hissar fortress for an indefensible cantonment outside Kabul on a plain surrounded by hills, and place the Commissariat outside the cantonment.
- The troops amuse themselves with pony races, cricket, hunting and

### 1841

- Popular resistance grows, led by Dost Muhammad’s son Muhamad Akbar Khan. The British (Elphinstone) do nothing.
- New British government reduces funds to Afghanistan warlords.
- Fall 1841 - Brigadier Robert Sale and his brigade is assigned to Jalalabad. Enroute from Kabul, and ambush enroute by warlords kills 105 soldiers.
- Akbar Khan proclaims a general revolt to begin on 2 November 1841.
- 1 November 1841. Trusted agent advises Burnes his house to be attacked.
- 2 November 1841. Political Agent Sir Alexander Burnes is murdered at his house along with his staff and guards. The British (Elphinstone) do nothing.
- 9 November 1841 - the Afghans storm the Commissariat. The British (Elphinstone) do nothing.
- 23 November 1841 - Afghans shell the cantonment from an overlooking hill with two cannon. A British attack is repulsed leaving behind 300 wounded to be slaughtered. Morale hits rock bottom. Elphinstone requests reinforcements from MG Nott at Kandahar. Nott unwillingly dispatched a brigade under Brigadier MacLaren but it was turned back by heavy snowfalls.
- November 1841, Siege of Jalalabad begins.

### Background

In the late 1830s, the British government and the British East India Company became obsessed with the idea that Emir Dost Mohammed of Afghanistan was courting Imperial Russia. They arranged passage through Sindh for an army which invaded Afghanistan and restored the former ruler Shuja Shah Durrani, whom Dost Mohammed had deposed thirty years earlier and who had been living as a pensioner in India. They also agreed safe passage for supplies and reinforcements from Maharaja Ranjit Singh of the Sikh Empire, in return for inducing Shah Shuja to cede the disputed region of Peshawar to him.

The British captured Kabul, and Dost Mohammed surrendered himself into British custody. Over the next year and a half, complacent British commanders withdrew some of their forces even as popular resistance grew, led by Dost Mohammed's son Akbar Khan. In November, 1841, General William George Keith Elphinstone, commanding the depleted garrison at Kabul, asked for reinforcements from Major General William Nott, commanding at Kandahar. Nott unwillingly dispatched a brigade under Brigadier MacLaren but it was turned back by heavy snowfalls.

Elphinstone let the murders of Political Agent Alexander Burnes and William Hay Macnaghten pass without exacting retribution, and signed a convention with Akbar Khan by which his army was to evacuate Kabul, and was guaranteed safe passage to Jalalabad, on the road to Peshawar. The result was the Massacre of Elphinstone's Army of 4,500 British and Indian soldiers and 12,000 camp followers by tribesmen. Only one British surgeon and a handful of Indian sepoy reached Jalalabad. Elphinstone and

### 6 January 1842

- At 9am, 17,000 souls evacuated the Kabul cantonment for the safety of the British garrison at Jalalabad 90 miles away through icy mountains.

Until the final minute, Major Pottinger begged Elphinstone to make a pretence of leaving and make a run for the Bala Hissar fortress.

- 250 Bengal cavalry rode at the head of 700 British soldiers and their 34 wives and children, 2,000 surviving Bengal Infantrymen, 1,150 irregular horse, 400 of Shuja's levies, and about 12,000 camp followers.
- There was no sign of the promised safe escort.
- An army of looters descended upon the deserted cantonment.
- Almost immediately, intermittent sniper fire started killing soldier and civilian alike. Soon mounted Afghans started attacking the column, driving off almost all pack animals and killing indiscriminately.
- The disorganised column only made about 5 of the scheduled 12 miles before nightfall.

### 7 January 1842

- Many froze that night, and many others were frostbitten.
- The survivors glumly started on again, order was lost, and the attacks by snipers and mounted Afghans continued. Stragglers were left to a hopefully quick fate.
- Late in the day, Akbar and several hundred mounted Afghans approached the column to upbraid Elphinstone for “not waiting for the promised escort.” Pottinger denounced this as a sham, but Elphinstone wanted to believe Akbar.
- Akbar asked for a 24 hour halt to the march so that he could coordinate with local tribesmen at the Khoord-Cabool Pass; Elphinstone agreed.
- Akbar then asked for three hostages; Elphinstone agreed, and Akbar shrewdly chose Pottinger and two other politically-savvy officers.
- Night fell over the chaos, and the freezing began anew.

### 8 January 1842

- The weary, half-frozen, half-starved column hobbled its way to the approaches of the four-mile long Khoord-Cabool Pass.
- Along the slopes above, Afghans started firing their longer range rifles and panic ensued, but nowhere was safe. A half-frozen stream running through the pass had to be crossed over a dozen times to escape the pass.
- Stragglers were put to the sword. Thousands died.
- Akbar rode through the carnage imploring his people *in Persian* to cease firing, while exhorting them *in Pashtu* to kill everyone.
- **3,000 casualties** are left in the gorge.

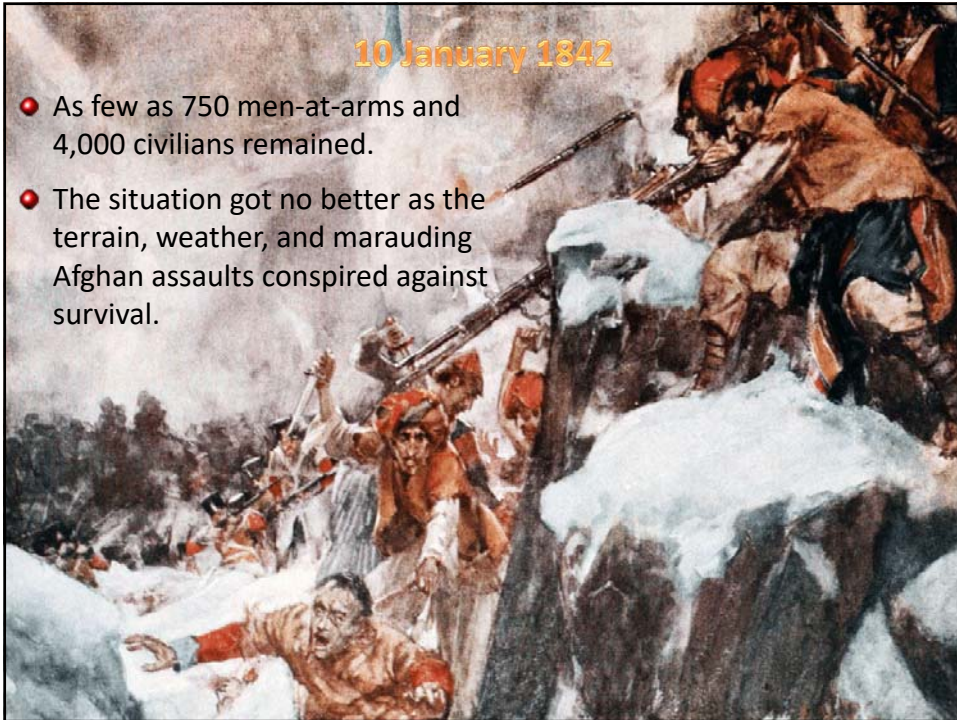


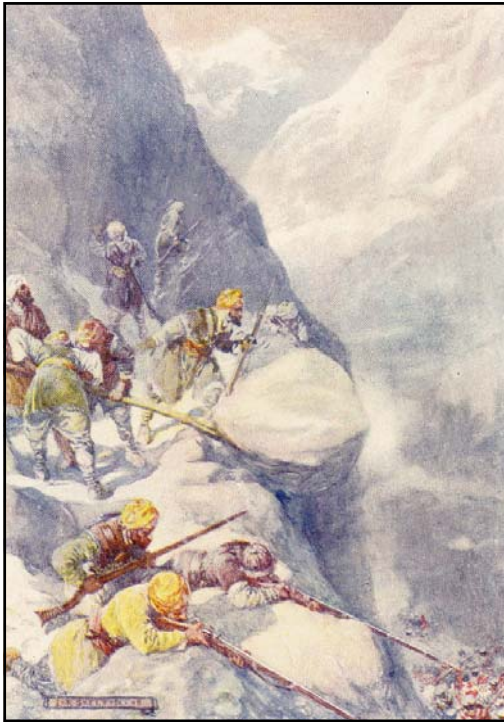
### 9 January 1842

- Death—and in the case of the Sepoys, wholesale desertion—had taken its toll. By now, the Native Infantry regiments were reduced to about 60 men each. The irregular Horse counted just 100 mounted troopers left; the 5th Light Cavalry just 70. Of the Queen's 44th, only about 200 Englishmen were still able to answer the rolls, a casualty rate of 90 percent.
- Mohammed Akbar and his retinue approached the column once again:
  - He professed himself greatly aggrieved that he was having difficulty convincing the tribesmen to curb their attacks.
  - He offered personal protection to any women, children and surviving husbands. Four men, 13 women, and 16 children, took up the offer.
- Repeated attacks then resumed along the tortuous, frigid, windswept trek.
- Those falling out due to hunger, snow-blindness, illness were massacred.

### 10 January 1842

- As few as 750 men-at-arms and 4,000 civilians remained.
- The situation got no better as the terrain, weather, and marauding Afghan assaults conspired against survival.





### 11 January 1842

- The madness continued.
- Throughout the day, the column was subjected to repeated Afghan attacks as it trekked through the frigid, windswept wilderness.
  - Tortured by hunger and thirst, some tried to eat snow.
  - Many not felled by bullets froze to death.
  - Snow-blind were left behind.
- Anyone abandoned soon found themselves being battered and slashed at as they stumbled and crawled helplessly among the snowdrifts.

### 12 January 1842

- Numbers were reduced to 200 men-at-arms and 2,000 civilians remained as Afghans continued their assaults.
- Akbar had been shadowing the column, and now made another offer of protection and safe-conduct back to India.
- Defying logic, Elphinstone agreed to meet with him, taking Brig. Shelton, Major Pottinger and some others. All were promptly seized as hostages.
- Elphinstone somehow got a message to Brigadier Thomas Anquetil, 44<sup>th</sup> Foot, ordering his to press on with all despatch.
- That night, they crossed over hills and through mountains to the final pass blocking the route to Jalalabad, Jagdalak Pass, and found it completely blocked by unattended thorn bushes.
- Frantically pulling the bushes aside, they saw the Afghans arrive. Anquetil and a dozen other officers were killed and it became every man for himself, with some exceptions.

### 12-13 January 1842

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### 12-13 January 1842

- Fewer than 80 men clawed their way through the thorn barrier, and the remainder died by bullet, blade and rock.
- Assistant Surgeon William Brydon almost didn't make it. He had been pulled from his horse at the barrier and an Afghan blade sliced into the centre of his skull.

The freezing refugees had insulated their inadequate uniforms with whatever they could get, and Brydon had insulated his cap with a issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*, which deflected the blade just enough. He managed to pull himself through the thorns.

- He came upon a dying Indian cavalryman still holding his horse's reins. The sepoy died in his arms and he mounted the horse and rode away in the darkness, linking up with five other mounted riders.
- A group that made it through the barrier was the disciplined survivors of the British 44<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot – 20 officers and 45 infantrymen with only 40 rounds between them.

### 13 January 1842

- Through the Jagdalak Pass the terrain opened up somewhat, but the 44th still had about 30 miles to Jalalabad and the terrain favoured the thousands of well-mounted and armed Afghans.
- As the sun rose, so did the attacks. With ammunition critically short they were soon down to two rounds of ammunition when they found themselves completely surrounded by Ghilzye tribesmen.
- The rugged terrain lent itself to the defense, and the 44<sup>th</sup> formed a square to meet their fate, fixing bayonets and resolving to die giving as good as they got.
- It's said that the Afghan's offered an honourable surrender, but the men of the 44th refused so fighting resumed to its inevitable end.

Ironically, Captain Souter who'd wrapped the regimental colours around his body to save them was spared because they thought his colourful attire made him a VIP who would fetch a ransom.

### The Battle of Gandamak, 13 January 1842



### 13 January 1842

- Meanwhile, Dr. Brydon and his five companions charged hell-for-leather through the hostile countryside, throughout the night and into the following day, in a desperate attempt to reach Jalalabad.
- About fifteen miles from Jalalabad, they came upon the village of Futtebad, where smiling villagers offered them food and drink and a chance to rest their blown horses. Foolishly, they dismounted.
- Immediately, mounted Afghan warriors brandishing muskets and swords and howling like banshees rushed into the village. Brydon and four others managed to remount and flee for their lives, but were picked off one by one until only Brydon was left.
- On and on he rode, fighting off every attack as best he could, at least three life-threatening. Then a musket ball snapped off the blade of his saber, and in a desperate last act he flung the useless hilt into an attacker's face.
- Then he was in a broad, open plain, and the Afghans faded away. In the distance, the massive walls of Jalalabad rose.

### Dr William Brydon arrives at Jalalabad





### The bad news spreads

- Lord Auckland was said to age ten years overnight on hearing of the disaster. He nevertheless dispatched Major General William Pollock with reinforcements to Peshawar, to relieve the besieged garrison of Jalalabad.
- Auckland's scheduled replacement Lord Ellenborough arrived off Madras on 21 February. He intended to restore British prestige and honour.
- At this point, the British still held several garrisons in Afghanistan:
  - Kandahar under Brigadier Nott,
  - Ghazni, between Kandahar and Kabul, under Colonel Thomas Palmer,
  - Jalalabad under Brigadier Robert Sale.
- POW General Elphinstone ordered the garrisons to evacuate per his agreement with Akbar Khan. Nott and Sale **ignored Elphinstone's order**, but Palmer obeyed it, leaving the citadel under a safe-conduct on 6 March.
- Shah Shuja held the fortress of Bala Hissar in Kabul and was attempting to bribe chiefs and tribes to his cause, although he was no longer supported by the British.

### Developments in March and April

- During the late winter and spring, there was fighting around all the British enclaves. On 6 March, Palmer's troops\* at Ghazni came under attack as they left the citadel, fighting from house to house until forced to surrender on 10 March. The sepoys who refused to convert to Islam were murdered, and ten surviving British officers became prisoners of Akbar Khan. Palmer was tortured to reveal imaginary treasure but survived for a court-martial.
- Meanwhile, on 10 February, Nott had led a force from Kandahar against the tribes blockading him. The Afghans, under a wily chief named Mirza Ahmed, bypassed him and attacked the city, setting fire to a gate to gain entry. They were driven off by the small garrison, suffering heavy casualties.
- Nott's supplies were running short, and a brigade under Brigadier England which tried to reach him from Quetta with supplies was repulsed. With Kandahar no longer threatened, Nott sent a substantial detachment to rendezvous with England and escort him to Kandahar.

\* 27<sup>th</sup> Bengal Native Infantry

### The end game nears

- After wavering for some weeks, Sale led sorties by the garrison of Jalalabad on 19 February against the besiegers.
- 31 March, Pollock forced his way through the Khyber Pass. He sent his troops up the height on either side of the pass to outflank defenders, and succeeded with very few casualties.
- 5 April, Shah Shuja emerged from the Bala Hissar (which had withstood the siege as Pottinger had predicted) under a safe-conduct from Akbar, and was promptly assassinated. His son Futteh Jung proclaimed himself his successor, but he had even less support than his father.
- 7 April, Sale led another sortie from Jalalabad, defeating the besiegers and forcing them to raise the siege.
- Pollock reached Jalalabad on 14 April, to find the siege lifted.

### Auckland's replacement, another dufus

- In India, Lord Ellenborough wanted to avoid the expense of a long war and ordered Nott and Pollock to retreat, arguing that once the British had evacuated Afghanistan, negotiations with Akbar Khan for the release of the hostages could proceed calmly.
- Ellenborough was opposed by his generals and by the government in Britain, all of whom argued that stern retribution was required.
- He accordingly modified his orders. Pollock and Nott were again ordered to retreat, but Nott was allowed to retreat by way of Kabul if he chose (a detour of over 300 miles (480 km)), and Pollock was also permitted to move to Kabul to cover Nott's retreat.

The late nineteenth-century historian John William Kaye argued, "No change had come over the views of Lord Ellenborough, but a change had come over the meaning of certain words in the English language."

We must leave the Afghans themselves to create a government amidst the anarchy which is the consequence of their crimes.

Edward Law

1st Earl of Ellenborough GCB PC  
Governor-General of India, 1842–1844



### Nott's final British "retreat"

- Nott's "retreat" began 9 August. Sending some of his troops with camp-followers back to Quetta, he advanced with two British regiments (the 40th Foot and the 41st Foot), sepoy regiments which had earlier distinguished themselves and four batteries of artillery.
  - 29 August, Nott's cavalry suffered heavy losses in a mishandled attack.
  - 30 August, Nott defeated a force of 10,000 Afghans at Khelat-i-Ghilzai near Ghazni.
  - 30 November, Ghazni fell without opposition, and the city was looted.
- Lord Ellenborough had specifically ordered Nott to recover a set of ornate gates, the Somnath Gates, which Afghans had looted from India and hung at the tomb of Sultan Mahmud II. A sepoy regiment, the 43rd Bengal Native Infantry was dispatched to carry the gates back to India.
- 17 September, Nott's force arrived at Kabul. Pollock had arrived two days earlier.

### Pollock's final British "retreat"

- Pollock's army advanced from Jalalabad with four brigades, one of which was made wholly of British troops.
- 13 September, Pollock defeated some 15,000 tribesmen deployed by Akbar Khan, clearing the way to Kabul.

Along the way, they came across numerous skeletons and unburied bodies. In spite of orders from Ellenborough to show restraint, they committed many savage reprisals against villages and their inhabitants.

- Pollock reached Kabul on 15 September, two days before Nott.
- A detachment from Pollock's army laid waste to Charikar, in revenge for the destruction and massacre of an irregular Gurkha unit there.
- Finally, the British looted much of Kabul and destroyed the historic covered bazaar. On October 11, they retired through Jalalabad to Peshawar. Afghans harassed the armies in their retreat, causing casualties all the way although no units were broken.

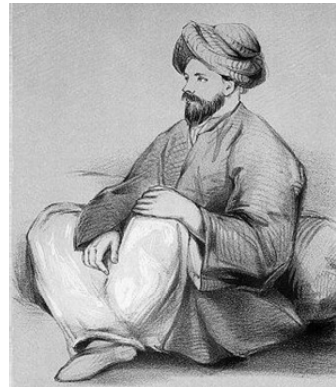
### The release of Akbar's "honoured guests"

- Akbar wanted to sell the hostages as slaves and disavow knowledge of them, but as Nott and Pollock advanced, this didn't seem wise. The hostages began to be treated less severely than previously, although they were moved to Bamian to keep them from the British armies.
- Elphinstone died from dysentery on 23 April 1842, but Pottinger, Shelton, Lady Sale, and, in all, 22 officers, 37 soldiers, 19 women and 22 child hostages survived.
- Nott had been urged to send cavalry to rescue the hostages, but demurred (perhaps because of his cavalry's defeat on 29 August). So Pollock sent a force of 600 under Captain Sir Richard Shakespear and Brigadier Sale to rescue them.
- The relief force was astonished to find the hostages being protected by a bodyguard made up of their former jailers. The world, it seemed, had turned upside down.

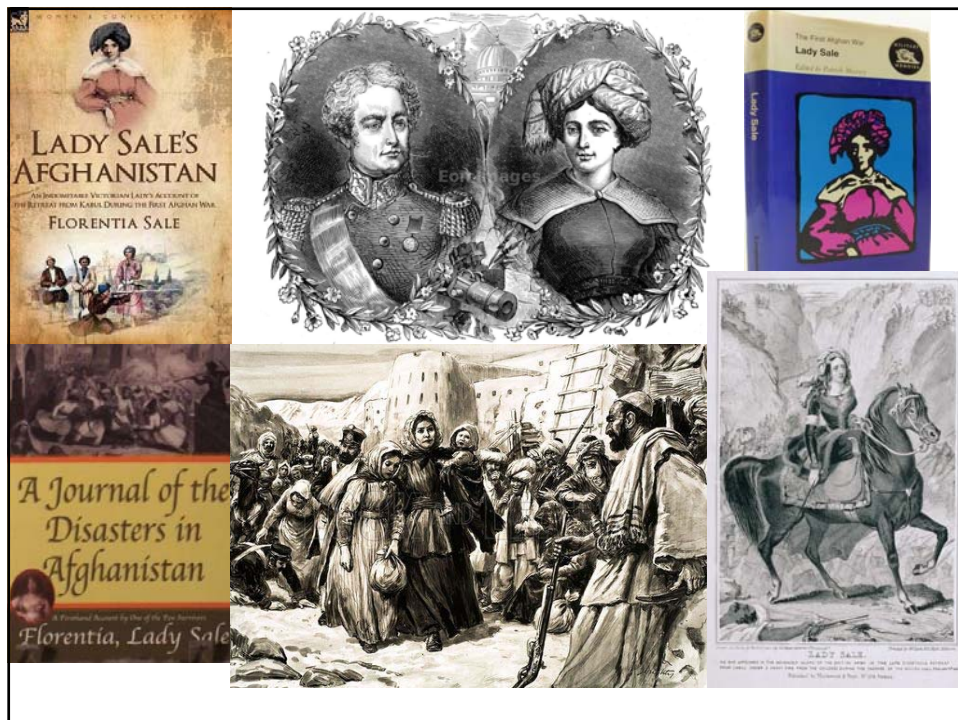


### The release of Akbar's "honoured guests"

- With two British armies rampaging through the countryside, Akbar Khan's hostages, including Major Eldred Pottinger and Lady Sale, had negotiated their own release in return for a bribe of 20,000 rupees (which Pottinger had somehow managed to keep hidden) and a promised monthly pension.
- The relief force arrived at the old British fortress of Bamian to find it again in British hands, with the former prisoners being served by their former jailors.
- As an aside, Pottinger had been political officer in Kohistan when the insurrection broke out, and had fled to the Gurkha garrison at Charikar in time to be besieged for two weeks. Though badly wounded, he escaped to Kabul and barely avoided **the massacre of the Charikar Garrison**.



Major Eldred Pottinger, CB



### Lessons (learned?)

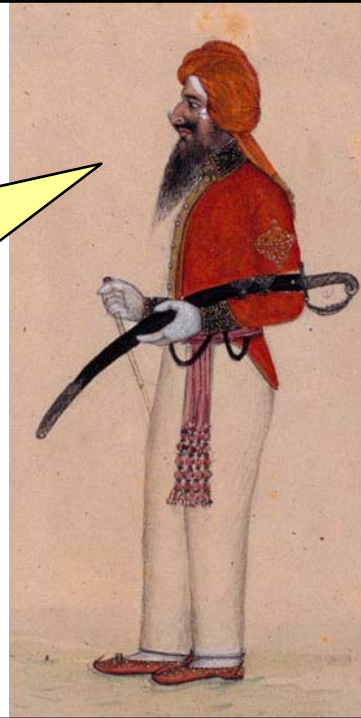
- It is relatively straightforward to invade Afghanistan, but impractical to try to govern or administer it.
- Political interference from Lord Auckland hampered operations.
- The British failed to appoint suitable senior officers. The character and determination of leaders can be decisive in determining the morale and success of a military expedition.
  - It is extraordinary that officers, particularly senior officers like Elphinstone and Shelton, felt able to surrender themselves as hostages, thereby ensuring their survival, while their soldiers struggled on, to be massacred by the Afghans.
- Local political officers should not be permitted to predominate over military judgments in situations that are predominantly military.

### Lessons (learned?)

- From the beginning, the British backed the wrong man. The “leaders” simply didn’t listen to the very few people who knew the country (and its language and customs).
- A fundamental misunderstanding of the Afghan way of life undermined every decision taken. Only with the support of the local tribal chiefs could Afghanistan be ruled, support that the Shah and his foreign allies wholly failed to secure.
- Once in Kabul, the British were unwilling or unable to provide strong support for the regime they had installed and found themselves without a clear-cut role.
- However effective, high-ranking British officers seemed to not hold themselves accountable to anyone but themselves (even if their disobedience was the right thing to do at times).

If things had been left to the memsahibs, it would have turned out better.

Wise words of a surviving Sepoy whose name I came across but it escapes me now.



### Postscript

- The Kabulis deposed Shuja's heir Futteh immediately the British left. He left with them, leaving a deputy to be "deposed".
- The British, determined to exert some measure of control over the recalcitrant Afghans, promptly began casting around for a suitable replacement to bring them to heel.
- In a final irony, they found in India an exiled Afghan prince who had grown fond of the British during his years as a "guest" of the British government. His name was



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### Dost Mohammed Khan

### Aftermath

- Within three months of the final British retreat, the British allowed Dost Mohamed to return from India to resume rule.
- Akbar Khan died shortly afterwards (rumoured to have been poisoned by his dad).
- Dost Mohamed's subsequent relations with the British were equivocal until his death. He half-heartedly supported the Sikhs during the Second Anglo-Sikh War in return for the recovery of Peshawar, but the British never abandoned the city and the Sikhs were defeated.
- He remained neutral during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- British policy avoided expeditions into Afghanistan for nearly forty years (and the Russians stayed away).