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From "Masterly Inactivity" to Limited Autonomy: Afghanistan as a Catalyst for Liberal Imperialism

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FROM “MASTERLY INACTIVITY” TO LIMITED AUTONOMY:
AFGHANISTAN AS A CATALYST FOR LIBERAL IMPERIALISM

By

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ...................................................................................................... iv

1. Chapter One: Introduction—What is Liberal Imperialism? ......................... 1

2. Chapter Two: War in Afghanistan ............................................................ 9

3. Chapter Three: The British Empire and Evolving Foreign Policy ............... 22

4. Chapter Four: The Courage of Gladstone’s Convictions ............................ 37

5. Chapter Five: Disraeli versus Gladstone ............................................... 52


REFERENCES .............................................................................................. 73

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ............................................................................. 78
ABSTRACT

Afghanistan was both the site of an experiment in traditional imperialism, as well as the first area where the concept of Liberal imperialism was introduced. The end of the Second Afghan War was a catalyst for British foreign policy. The aftermath of this war would lead to a reassessment of the goals of British imperial policy, including the eventual changes in the definition of imperialism.

This thesis seeks to establish the role of the British experience in Afghanistan in the creation of Liberal imperialism. The personal beliefs and experiences of the most important figure of the Liberal Party, William Ewart Gladstone, the Prime Minister of Britain at the conclusion of the Second Afghan War (1878-1881), will be used to examine the moral values espoused by the Liberal Party in Afghanistan.

These values can be seen in many contemporary sources, such as newspapers and Gladstone’s personal correspondence and diaries. As this thesis intends to prove the British experience in Afghanistan served as a catalyst for Liberal imperialism, the term must first be defined by a study of the historiography of British imperial policy. To further this understanding of the British policies, attention will be paid to contemporary newspapers’ portrayal of Afghanistan and Gladstone’s actions concerning the country. In addition to papers from Britain, one newspaper from India, The Times of India, will also be consulted to gain local citizens impressions on the war. Although newspapers serve as an excellent source of contemporary opinion, letters written by and to Gladstone show another side of the issue. In his personal correspondence and diaries, Gladstone reveals his own opinions on Afghanistan, and how his policies in the country are a part of the overall moral foreign policy he advocated for Britain.

The changes in British imperial policy initiated by the Liberal Imperialists would last until the end of the British Empire. Although most historians see the beginnings of Liberal imperialism with the struggle for African dominance in the late 1880s and 1890s, the role of the Second Afghan War and the resulting changes in foreign policy marked this turn towards a new imperialism. The impact of the British experience in Afghanistan is overlooked in the historiography of liberal imperialism, yet its role as a catalyst for new ideas of imperialism for both the Conservative and Liberal parties is not one which can be forgotten.
British imperial policy in Afghanistan was the catalyst for the concept of Liberal imperialism. Although Liberal imperialism was not identified as a concept until fifteen years after the British had withdrawn from Afghanistan in 1882, several clear patterns emerged from the failed project. These patterns include the idea of a British Empire for purely economic reasons; an empire existing to extend the British sphere of influence; an imperial power coming into a country specifically to help the native citizens; and an imperial government devolving power to local governments. Continuing as the major factors in British imperial policy for the rest of the nineteenth century, these patterns would eventually force a change in the language of British imperialism.

Imperialism today can be interpreted as economic, political, cultural, military, informal, and formal. These definitions of imperialism were derived from the ideas espoused by the Liberal Imperialists at the end of the nineteenth century. Before these views were adopted, the definition of imperialism was much narrower, focusing solely on the economic and military virtues of expanding empire. Prior to undertaking any discussion of Liberal imperialism, imperialism as it stood in the nineteenth century must be defined.

Imperialism has always been regarded as a word with “unpleasant connotations.” Its usage in the English language can be traced back to the French schemes to increase its empire during the 1840s. These French schemes, coming only thirty years after the defeat of Napoleon, stirred up negative feelings in Britain. The traditional definition of European imperialism, derived from these French actions, states that imperialism “arose from Europe’s economic transformation in the early modern period, which gave it both a technological and an organizational superiority and a need for markets and sources of raw materials.” The idea of the conditions leading to imperialism directly resulting from this economic transformation partially explains why Britain, as a leader in European industrialization, was the preeminent European imperialist power.

The need for territory that drove Britain to expand its zone of influence and power was influenced by three separate attitudes. The first of these attitudes concerned the British feeling of superiority in the late nineteenth century, as a result of having the dominant navy and largest empire in the world. This superiority manifested itself in the idea that it was “‘cheek’ for rivals to trench [entrench] upon British world-wide interests, a threat to her pre-eminence and an insult to her prestige.” Fears of a loss of British pre-eminence in the world would drive British imperial policies in the late nineteenth century.

3 The British had defeated the French at the Battle of Waterloo and forced them to abandon the grandiose imperial schemes of Napoleon I, who had extended French power to cover much of Europe.
as other nations grew more powerful and were able to challenge British dominance in the world.

In addition to the obvious economic benefits for the British in building an empire of ready-made consumers and a base of raw materials that were needed for the country’s industrial goals, the British Empire was also seen as a way to export British moral values and cultural mores. This urge to mold the “natives” into proper citizens of the British Empire is evident in the moral language which colored discussions of empire from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Moral language grew in popularity as the British Empire grew bigger and members of the Liberal Party tried their best to justify what some contended were unnecessary imperialist maneuvers.  

The third attitude behind the British drive for territorial expansion was the horror of economic stagnation, or the idea that countries which were satisfied with their current level of production were inferior to countries which increased their economic production. The British saw the failure of a country to increase production as an open invitation to enter the country. As British policies at the end of the nineteenth century would show, the prevailing official opinion believed that resources in the countries existed to be used. The fact that the citizens of these countries did not make sufficient use of their natural resources was an anathema to the British. Statements made by members of the British government in the late nineteenth century included the idea that Africa and Asia would only modernize with the help of the British. However, it must be noted that although the third attitude regarding British imperialism had its supporters, helping a country to recover from economic stagnation was not the first priority for British imperialists—instead, they wanted to assure continued British world-wide dominance and imperial power.

It was this imperial power that the Liberal Party wanted to harness at the end of the nineteenth century. Definitions of British imperialism changed at the beginning of the 1880s. As the British experience in Afghanistan showed, the original policies espoused by the Liberal Party concerning imperialist behavior were no longer considered viable. No longer could imperialism be solely about military or economic gains, instead, as the Liberal Party learned in the experience of Afghanistan, imperialism was now responsible for the ramifications of British involvement in a country. This new moral attitude towards imperialism is reflected in the concept of Liberal imperialism.

Many different authors have attempted to define Liberal imperialism. Most of these authors’ works date from the middle of the twentieth century, so they cannot be considered contemporary with the inception of the term. However, a study of these authors provides an invaluable insight into imperialist discourse because most of their works were written as the British Empire crumbled. Although many different conceptions of Liberal imperialism remain, all of the authors acknowledge several facts. These facts included the idea that Liberal imperialism was first recognized as a concept in the aftermath of the British experience in Afghanistan and during the British imperial conquests in Africa. As the empire grew in size, the Liberal Party was forced to contend

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7 Hyam, 210-211. For more evidence of British attitudes regarding modernization and the need to help countries to modernize see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa 1895-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1968).
with the idea that the empire must be protected at all costs. This idea was a new concept for the Liberals to embrace, as they had always placed the blame for imperialist thought on the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party was seen as the party that advocated business interests and was influenced by the mercantilist members of the British aristocracy who wanted the expanded empire to serve as a market for their products. In proving this point, that imperialism was the sole responsibility of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party turned imperialism into “a smear word to stigmatize the policies of Benjamin Disraeli [the leader of the Conservative Party].”

Liberal Imperialists were thus forced to go against their party’s preconceived notions of imperialism as a fundamentally evil idea. The man who is credited with introducing the concept of Liberal imperialism was Lord Archibald Philip Primrose Rosebery. Rosebery was a Member of Parliament and a Prime Minister in the late 1880s. He first applied the term “Liberal Imperialist” to himself in a speech he gave in Sheffield on October 20, 1885:

The other day I was described as a Liberal Imperialist. So far as I understand these two words that is a perfectly accurate description. If a Liberal Imperialist means that I am a Liberal passionately attached to the Empire…if it means that I am a Liberal who believes that the Empire is best maintained on the basis of the widest democracy, and that its voice is powerful in proportion to the number of contented subjects that it represents…if these be accurate descriptions of what a Liberal Imperialist is, then I am a Liberal Imperialist.

As the quotation from Rosebery’s speech indicates, the classification of Liberal Imperialists is not the crux of the problem when attempting to identify Liberal imperialism. Instead, the problem is in defining the idea behind Liberal imperialism. Even Rosebery, the man history credits with introducing the term Liberal Imperialist to the discourse, is uncertain as to the true definition of the label. Some historians see Liberal imperialism as a purely political theory, others see the concept as an apologetic explanation for a policy the Liberal Party was forced to continue, and still others see Liberal imperialism as an example of the heated rhetoric which characterized the inter-party strife which eventually led to the Liberal Party’s division and fall from social relevance.

All of the above interpretations of Liberal imperialism are valid. However, a complete definition of the concept must take elements from each interpretation. The first interpretation, that Liberal imperialism is a purely political theory, was the interpretation favored by members of the Liberal Party who became Liberal Imperialists. It was not

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8 Eldridge, xv.
until later historians began their examinations of the period that the later connotations of the term were introduced. As the quote from Lord Rosebery shows, Liberal Imperialists still considered themselves to be members of the same political party and followed the dominant Liberal ideology. This intermingled identity would remain the key characteristic of Liberal imperialism and Liberal Imperialists until after the last term of William Ewart Gladstone as Prime Minister.

Gladstone would dominate the Liberal Party until the middle of the 1890s. Although Rosebery first stated his feelings as a Liberal Imperialist in 1885, the movement did not gain much support until the early 1890s, once Gladstone was no longer in control of the party. By 1892, members of the Liberal Party who considered themselves Liberal Imperialists made up eight percent of the Liberal Members of Parliament. One decade later, the number of Liberal Imperialists in Parliament comprised one third of all the Liberals.\(^\text{11}\) This change was partially due to the death of Gladstone and the vacuum he left at the top of Liberal Party leadership. With Gladstone’s death, the Liberal Party lost both its figurehead and the embodiment of the original values the Liberal Party stood for. His death provided the opportunity for those advocating change in imperial policies to have a greater say in the direction of the party. The leadership vacuum left by Gladstone’s death was only partially filled by the Liberal Imperialists. Other members of the Liberal Party advocated different policies, including a less imperialist foreign policy and the granting of Home Rule to Ireland.\(^\text{12}\)

The second idea behind Liberal imperialism is a response to the internal struggles of the Liberal Party. This idea is one of an apologetic policy adopted by the Liberals to explain the reasons behind imperialism. The Liberal Imperialists advocated a slow devolution of imperial government, in effect a “loosening of imperial bands and for transfer of the costs of administration to colonial governments they also wished to strengthen, by all means possible the ties between the colonies and the mother country.”\(^\text{13}\) In addition, this “new” imperialism was also seen as a much more sentimental, with elements of moral superiority included in discussions of empire. These sentiments included the idea of conquering a territory, such as the British did in Africa, to help her “‘development’ or ‘exploitation,’ and of the interests (for those who took any notice of them) of her inhabitants.”\(^\text{14}\) The inclusion of this parenthetical comment speaks volumes about the attitude of historians towards Liberal imperialism. Although the stated aim of the theory was to include the natives in the progress experienced by the rest of the British Empire, in actuality the Liberal Imperialists were not successful in achieving this goal. The main idea of the Liberal Imperialists in the apologetic policy argument was to “bridge the gap between the advocates and opponents of empire.”\(^\text{15}\) Although the idea of

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\(^\text{12}\) The Home Rule controversy had an impact on every British election following 1880. Gladstone advocated Home Rule for the Irish, a political position which eventually led to his downfall as Liberal Party leader. The questions of Home Rule are too many to be studied in this work, but the main idea is that the Irish people wanted to have an autonomous government and the hope of gaining permanent independence. The question of Irish Home Rule would not be settled until after the First World War. Home Rule greatly influenced foreign policy decisions.

\(^\text{13}\) Huttenback, 26.

\(^\text{14}\) Porter, 36.

\(^\text{15}\) Huttenback, 26.
finding an area of compromise for imperialists and anti-imperialists was important to the Liberal Party, it was not the pressing concern for a large percentage of the party’s membership, as most were more concerned with national and not international policies.

The third interpretation of Liberal imperialism, that it was an example of heated inter-party rhetoric, is the interpretation which is given the most credence by modern historians. As H.G.C. Matthew wrote in the preface to his book on Liberal Imperialists:

The group [of Liberal Imperialists] believed that to restore the Liberals as the naturally predominant party in British politics required a shift in the balance of power within the party, accompanied by nothing less than a complete re-appraisal of the nature of liberalism as a political creed…Political power and electoral success could not, the group thought, be achieved without a fundamental overhaul of Liberal policy, and were anyway pointless unless relevant policies had been developed to be put into practice. Ideological reform could not be effectively worked out unless the group had achieved a dominant position within the party, and was of little value unless its means of execution was at hand.16

In his introduction, Matthew is trying to lay out the reasons why Liberal imperialism was different from the theories and philosophies which traditionally formed Liberal ideology. The presence of Gladstone held the Liberal Party together. After he stepped down from the leadership, the Liberal Party went through a period of turmoil. This interpretation of Liberal imperialism claims that it was espoused as a way of establishing a new Liberal policy. Unfortunately, the new Liberal policy proposed by Liberal Imperialists would not be enough to help the beleaguered, divided Liberal Party to survive as a major political party in the twentieth century.

Matthew is not the only historian who believes that Liberal imperialism was merely a rhetorical device. This argument is also advanced by Peter D. Jacobson. He claims that the term arose around the time of the Boer War in South Africa (1898-1902) and should only be applied to the Liberal Party in the years directly before and after the war. His definition is narrower than most other historians, but it must be acknowledged because as Liberal imperialism is an ideology, it does not need to have a defined time period. Jacobson’s definition of Liberal imperialism includes the following statement:

I shall argue that Liberal imperialism is best understood, not as ideology but as the rhetoric of party infighting during the Boer War, that it is best to confine the use of the label to the period of the war and its immediate aftermath, and that the spirit of the idea used by Liberal Imperialists, particularly as regards their perspective on the Empire, was defensive and pessimistic. In these years the Liberal right—no less than the Liberal left, with its attack on “imperialism”—was engaged in reassessing Britain’s world position.17

16 Matthew, ix.
17 Jacobson, 83-84.
Both Jacobson and Matthew mention the idea that even the Liberal Imperialists saw their theories and rhetoric as limited. Jacobson includes the idea that the Liberal Imperialists saw their own position as “defensive and pessimistic.” It is an acknowledged fact in all Liberal Imperialist discourse that the time for the Liberal Imperialists was brief, and their influence was negligible at best on general British foreign policy at the turn of the twentieth century.

The second wave of Liberal imperialism resulted with the attempts to break the Liberal Party further apart after the schism resulting from the rise of the Liberal Imperialists. By 1902, imperialism was the acknowledged driving force behind British foreign policy. As a young lieutenant, Winston Churchill wrote the following about turn of the century British imperialism:

What enterprise that an enlightened community may attempt is more noble and more profitable than the reclamation from barbarism of a fertile region and large populations? To give peace to warring tribes, to administer justice where all was violence, to strike the chains off the slave, to draw the richness from the soil, to plant the earliest seeds of commerce and learning, to increase in whole peoples their capacities for pleasure and diminish their chances of pain—what more beautiful ideal or more valuable reward can inspire human effort? The act is virtuous, the exercise invigorating, and the result often extremely profitable.

Imperialism, with all of its flaws, would remain the significant factor in British foreign policy until after the Second World War. The Liberal Party’s inability to conform to the new ideas of imperialism played a large role in the demise of the party. The first country where the Liberal Party was forced to confront the issue of “new” imperialism was Afghanistan. Liberal actions in Afghanistan reflect a blend of “old” and “new” imperialist policy, as the party struggled to find a level of imperial control which would serve both foreign policy and moral needs.

The British government first became involved in Afghanistan in the middle of the nineteenth century. The First Afghan War, which began in 1838, was an example of the imperial policies followed by the British government at the time. The British government decided that, for both economic and military reasons, a puppet leader friendly to British interference needed to be installed in the country. Although the British were able to install a new leader, the move provoked rebellion in Afghanistan, resulting in the forced evacuation of the British in 1842. The treaty which ended the First Afghan War gave the British nominal control over the foreign affairs of Afghanistan, a point which would have great importance at the beginning of the Second Afghan War.

The Second Afghan War (1878-1881) resulted from the Conservative government’s drive to expand the British Empire. Disraeli and his Indian Viceroy, saw in Afghanistan the opportunity to both prevent Russia from entering into India, the “crown jewel” of the British Empire, an omnipresent fear in British imperial politics, and to enlarge the British sphere of influence in Central Asia. The events of the Second Afghan

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18 Halvey, 344.
War were similar to those of the First Afghan War, including forced regime change by the British resulting in the disgraceful evacuation of British troops. Like the First Afghan War, the Second Afghan War ended in a stalemate, but the treaty which ended the Second Afghan War did not provide for the British to retain nominal control over Afghanistan’s foreign affairs.

The Liberal Party introduced a new idea for Afghanistan as a direct result of criticisms of the Conservative government’s handling of these situations in Afghanistan. After coming to power in 1880, the Liberals “forged a new Afghan policy whose goals were a well defended Indian frontier and an independent Afghanistan under British political control.”

One of the most important ideas espoused by Liberal Imperialists was the devolution of power to local governments.

After the Second Afghan War, Afghanistan was the first country whose leader, Abdur Rahman, was given this increased amount of self-governance. The success of this British policy would become evident with his handling of events on the border between Afghanistan and Russian territory in 1885.

As a result of the Liberal Imperialist tendencies which had begun in British politics by the end of the Second Afghan War, a capable ruler was placed on the throne of Afghanistan, and the British Empire was no longer involved militarily in the region.

By the time that the Liberal Imperialists had evolved into an established faction within the Liberal Party, Afghanistan was no longer an issue of great concern to British foreign affairs. However, Afghanistan still can be seen as the first country to be invaded under the ideals that would later form the basis of Liberal imperialism. It can be seen as the linkage between “old” imperialism, which is represented by the beginning of the Second Afghan War in 1878, under the Conservative government of Disraeli, and the “new” imperialism espoused by Gladstone and other members of the Liberal Party.

“New” imperialism slowly evolved over the course of a decade to Liberal imperialism. The ideas which mattered to Liberal Imperialists—moral virtues, extension of the British values to other countries, economic viability of conquered areas, devolution of imperial power—can all be derived from the British experience in Afghanistan. Some of these ideas do not originate from the policies actually implemented in the country, but instead were invented as a result of difficulties encountered by the British. For example, the economic need for empire was missing from the British invasion. Without the economic incentive to continue war, Gladstone and the Liberals disengaged from combat in the country at the first opportunity. If economic potential existed in the country, in the form of favorable trade interests, there would have been more incentive to stay and the history of Central Asia could be very different in the present day.

The virtues of Liberal imperialism are many, and its pitfalls are fewer than those of traditional imperialism. Although Liberal imperialism may be remembered more as a political concept characterized by inter-party rhetoric, Liberal Imperialists also stood for several advances in British foreign policy. The successful example of Abdur Rahman in

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21 Britain and Russia almost engaged in open warfare over the town of Panjdeh on the border of Afghanistan and territory Russia considered part of its empire. The question of what Afghanistan’s borders were would not be fully settled until the creation of the Durand Line in 1893.
Afghanistan made this Liberal imperialist strategy one which would also be implemented elsewhere as the century came to a close.

A strong case can be made for Afghanistan’s role as a catalyst for Liberal imperialism. Although the term was not introduced into the lexicon until seven years after the beginning of the Second Afghan War, enough of the signifying factors which led to a determination of Liberal imperialism were present in the British experience in Afghanistan. Instead of calling Afghanistan the first example of Liberal imperialism, it must instead be granted the position of a defining moment in British foreign policy; the moment when foreign policy makers began to realize that imperialism had more than just military or economic virtues to the British Empire.22

To begin a study of the impact of Afghanistan on British imperial policy, a clearer understanding of the events of the First and Second Afghan Wars is necessary. After gaining knowledge of these wars, then an understanding is possible of the reasons why the Liberal policies reflected changes in British conceptions of empire following the military debacles in the country. Consequently an analysis of these wars, and the political figures who decided the fate of Afghanistan, leads to a discussion of Afghanistan’s role as a catalyst for Liberal imperialism.

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22 The granting of autonomy and local control to Abdur Rahman was a turning point for the British. For the first time, a native leader was given the same amount of control that a British Viceroy was granted.
The importance and ramifications of the Second Afghan War cannot be understood without a thorough understanding of the events of the First Afghan War. This war, which was the first time that the British were defeated in the sovereign country of Afghanistan, began on the heels of other British military actions in Central Asia. Like the Second Afghan War, the first war was also launched over the perceived threat of Russian invasion of India and other British territories.

This British opinion, that the Russians were preparing to invade India through Afghanistan, was a prevailing theme in British imperial discourse at the time of the First Afghan War (1838-1842). It was also one of the reasons why the British chose to become involved in sovereign territory. The purpose of the British incursion was not to take over the entire country, but instead to gain control of the Khyber Pass. Who ever controlled this pass controlled the overland access to India, and Britain wanted to guarantee their control. Needing a reason to invade the country, the British used the Tripartite Pact of 1838. This pact, signed between the British, the deposed ruler of Afghanistan, and the leader of the Sikh Kingdom, had, as one of its clauses, the restoration of Shah Shujah, the deposed leader, to the throne of Afghanistan. The question of the ruler’s legitimacy began when Shujah was forced to seek asylum with the British in 1816. Since he was already in India, the goal of restoring him to the throne would be easy for the British to accomplish.

However, in 1826, while Shujah was in exile, Dost Mohammed rose to the throne of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Mohammed was not a part of Shujah’s dynasty, and as a result was not considered to be a legitimate ruler. Although he was illegitimate to rule, Dost Mohammed was the strongest leader to emerge from the power vacuum accompanying the exile of Shujah. This power led to his gaining the throne. Shujah, although in exile, had not given up his hopes of regaining his throne, and the British, who were looking for an excuse to go to war; found one. The removal of Dost Mohammed and the re-instatement of Shujah were the stated reasons why the British chose to invade. However, a large amount of confusion remained in Afghanistan as to who the rightful ruler should be. The British added to this confusion by entering the country in the fall of 1838.

Although the invasion of Afghanistan was begun by the British in 1838; they did not reach Kabul until August of 1839. Mohammed was forced out of the city by the fourth of the month, and the British Army was able to take the city, in a quick, decisive victory. The seemingly simple conflict was considered over by the British army, leading to letters written home by soldiers in Kabul, indicating that the army would withdraw.

24 T.A. Heathcote, The Afghan Wars 1839-1919 (London: Osprey, 1980), 67. This trend is also noted in Martin Ewans, Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 53. An article sharing these sentiments also appeared in the Bombay Times Eastern Intelligence, North West Provinces Section October 23, 1839.
25 Heathcote, 42.
from Afghanistan by that November. Although the conflict was perceived to be over, further uncertainty regarding Russian intentions remained. As the editorial section of The Bombay Times stated towards the end of 1839, “It is obvious then, that the only mode of counteracting and defeating such policy [Russian Policy] is by grappling with it. In whatever direction Russia attempts to encroach, England must advance to meet her.” At the end of 1839, apprehension remained about the situation in Afghanistan; over both the Russian threat and continued instability in the country.

The continued perception of a Russian threat presented a significant concern to the British public and government, reflected in the editorials published in The Times. The paper even published an extract of a soldier’s letter written on January 23, 1840. In his letter, he mentions the politics of the “Great Game” being contested by Russia and Britain. If an everyday soldier saw fit to comment on these international political events, then the machinations of both countries must have been fairly apparent to even casual observers in Afghanistan. The anonymous soldier observed, “At present we have much at stake here, and those employed share a vast responsibility, for we are fast drawing to that point when two great nations, England and Russia, must measure their strength on the plain of Central Asia.”

However, although the First Afghan War seemed to have drawn to a close in the fall of 1839, it would soon become apparent that this assumption was premature. Two major questions remained in regards to Afghanistan during this lull in the fighting. One question concerned the continued fear of Russian involvement, and the other was the continued hunt for Dost Mohammed, who was at-large in the country. To appease the British public, the press reported that the Russians were not working to restore Mohammed, as the British citizens feared.

The British achieved their original, stated goal, the removal of Dost Mohammed from power, when they entered Kabul in August 1839. However, Mohammed was still not under British control at the beginning of 1840. His lack of capture led to fears among the British that Mohammed would attempt to regain his throne, perhaps with the help of their enemy in the region, Russia. Hence, Mohammed needed to be apprehended by the British and forced to leave the country, and be moved to a place where he would no longer pose a threat to British interests. 

After the British entered the country, Dost Mohammed was removed from power. After his removal, he remained at large in Afghanistan, although he was captured by the

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26 Bombay Times Eastern Intelligence, North West Provinces Section November 20, 1839.
27 Bombay Times Editorial page December 14, 1839. The usage of newspapers is designed to provide a more complete picture of British public opinion both in the mother country, Britain, and in its major colony, India. Many references to these papers will be found in the text of this chapter.
28 The Times (London) is designed to show the majority opinions of the British public. The Times was the preeminent newspaper in London during the nineteenth century, and major governmental policies received a great deal of coverage in the newspaper.
29 This letter appeared in The Times (London) page 4 column 5 April 30, 1840. The editorial choice to include the letter, which references the situation between Britain and Russia, supports the Times’ policy of advocating that the government settle its foreign affairs in Central Asia. The importance of newspapers influencing foreign affairs is covered in Hannah Barker, Newspapers, Politics and English Society (London: Longman, 2000), 221.
30 Bombay Times Eastern Intelligence, North West Provinces Section June 10, 1840.
Amir of Bokhara in 1839.\textsuperscript{32} After Mohammed escaped from this capture, he was able to raise an army and attack the British forces. Once he had attacked the British, Mohammed was defeated, but not captured, in September of 1840. However, the British eliminated most of his support troops by the end of October, 1840 and Mohammed came to the realization that he would never completely defeat the British. Mohammed, as a man who “hold[s] high ideals as to valour” decided to offer himself up in surrender to the British, leading to his exile to India on November 12, 1840.\textsuperscript{33}

Dost Mohammed’s eventual surrender and capture, in early November, 1840, eliminated the threat, from his continued liberty and continuing political agitation, felt by the British.\textsuperscript{34} His surrender, and subsequent incarceration in India, was once again thought to herald the end of the war in Afghanistan. However, it was soon apparent that both the Russian threat, and the Afghans in general, would not be as easily subdued as Mohammed.\textsuperscript{35} By the end of 1840, public sentiment grew against further British involvement in Afghanistan. The British, who had re-installed Shah Shujah on the throne of Afghanistan a year earlier, were beginning to weary of their replacement for Dost Mohammed. A strong criticism of Shah Shujah was published in \textit{The Times} of September 9, 1840, showing more dissatisfaction with him, “…His [Shah Shujah’s] habits are those of a haughty, silly, sensual, confirmed reprobate…who, the moment that our forces were withdrawn from the country, would become the deserved victim of his own outraged subjects, by whom he is held in equal hatred and derision.”\textsuperscript{36}

The British, who had chosen to back Shah Shujah because of political reasons, now had a puppet who did not inspire much good will in his former country. Other members of Shujah’s dynasty were being suggested to possibly rule in his place as his behavior became more unpalatable to the Afghan people. Shujah’s son, Futteh Jong, the Governor at Kandahar, also received criticism from the British: “His [Jong’s] profligacy and oppressing were carried to the most disgusting lengths.”\textsuperscript{37} By early spring 1841, support for replacing Shujah with another family member had grown to a level the British could not ignore. Interestingly, the support for Shujah’s replacement began before the resurgence of the Afghans, led by Dost Mohammed’s son, Mohammed Akbar.\textsuperscript{38}

Once removed as a political threat, Dost Mohammed ironically began to gain Afghani popular support. By 1841, Dost Mohammed had become a tragic hero in the newspapers and editorials of the British press.\textsuperscript{39} Mohammed even took on connotations as a great leader, being described in even English publications as “the grand lion of the evening.”\textsuperscript{40} This description referred to a night of entertainment at Lord Auckland, the Governor General’s, home in Calcutta. A man who had once ruled an entire kingdom was

\textsuperscript{32} Ewans, 47.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 21.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Times} (London) page 5 columns 3-4 September 9, 1840.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Times} (London) page 5 column 1 January 8, 1841.
\textsuperscript{38} For the purposes of this paper, Afghans will refer to all who lived in Afghanistan. There was no cohesive national identity or unity, and the term Afghans to describe the inhabitants of the country did not occur until after the scope of this project.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Times} (London) page 5 columns 3-4 February 6, 1841.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Times} (London) page 3 column 6 August 4, 1841.
reduced to becoming a spectacle at the India House. The *Bombay Times*’ Monthly Supplement for the month of June includes the following statement which once again lionizes Dost Mohammed. “Ameer Dost Mohammed Khan was the Napoleon of Afghanistan [sic]: the ‘Sirdares’ may live and revel under the present Despot, but be it remembered *that the poor lived comfortably under the mild administration of Dost Mohammed Khan.*” Although Dost Mohammed was no longer present in Afghanistan, his popularity grew as a result of his expulsion by the British. The British would be forced to deal with the ramifications of Mohammed’s lionizing for the next two years.

In addition to the problems with Dost Mohammed’s growing popularity, the news from Afghanistan was not very encouraging for British political goals. As 1841 continued, there was a feeling, reflected in the press, that the government’s determination to continue waging war in Afghanistan was pure obstinacy. There was a perception that the British troops were fighting a losing battle by continuing to fight in Afghanistan without proper equipment. This perception would become a fact, as the British faced the problem in the year to follow. The problems of the British troops in Afghanistan were related to more than just their lack of equipment. There was also a severe lack of morale among the troops, and conflicts between the officers, who were all British, and the soldiers, some of whom were recruited from India.

Sentiment in Britain against the war was growing by the spring of 1841. In addition to the continued displeasure with the war, fears about Russia began to subside, and public opinion began to advocate the removal of British troops from Afghanistan. Several editorials began to question British policies in the country. By the time that the British were once again attacked by the Afghanis in early November 1841, public sentiment against the war was overwhelming.

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**Footnotes:**

41 *Bombay Times* Summary of Intelligence for the Month of June, Cabool and Kohistan June 19, 1841. The *Bombay Times* produced this supplement as a service for their readers. In it, they detailed the military and political events which occurred during the past month, and included a large amount of details from telegrams received from London.

42 *Times* (London) page 3 column 6 November 16, 1840.

43 British troops were ill-equipped to handle the conditions in Afghanistan. Traditional marches did not apply in Afghanistan, a mountainous, hilly, country that allowed for a great deal of resistance by the Afghanis. Also, Durand noted that the British were not prepared for as long a war as the one which occurred, leading to long supply lines. Durand, 355-358.

44 *Bombay Times* Summary of Intelligence for the Month of March, Cabool and Kohistan April 1, 1841. This lack of recognition is also mentioned in John William Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan Vol. II* (Delhi, Subhi Publications, 1999, reprinted from an 1851 edition), 300-304. The British used a large amount of Indian troops in the First Afghan War, as this war pre-dated the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, which led to the British choosing to no longer export large numbers of Indian troops with a British commanding officer.

45 *Bombay Times* Editorial page, *Agra Ukhbar* and its Correspondents April 24, 1841. These ideas are also examined in Forbes, 60-62.

46 *Bombay Times* North West Provinces Section May 15, 1841. British fears of Russia subsided after the question of who controlled the Dardanelle Straits was settled in July 1841, with control reverting back to the Ottoman Empire and the straits remaining closed to foreign ships in times of warfare. For more information on the treaty which ended this conflict, see A.L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923* Revised Edition (London: Longman, 1996), 25.

47 These sentiments became prevalent in the last months of 1841 in the editorial and letters to the editor pages of *The Times*. A study of papers finds at least one mention to the problems in Afghanistan on a daily basis.
The British hold on Afghanistan was tenuous before the resurgence of the Afghans under Mohammed Akbar. Support continued to wane as the first reports of disaster in Kabul, and the ensuing resurgence of the Afghanis began in November 1841. News of the Kabul uprising soon filtered to British troops stationed throughout the country, and to the British public back at home. At first, the British could not believe that their garrison in Kabul had been overrun, and that the Afghanis had forced their troops into retreat. By the first weeks of 1842, the British had, as a result of this uprising, begun the slow process of evacuating first Kabul, and then the entire country of Afghanistan.

By December the newspapers were full of accounts of this uprising, with some sources claiming to have seen it coming. As the year ended, the first “Letters to the Editor” sections which dealt with the disaster in Kabul were published. The Bombay Times of December 15, 1841 printed a letter which contained the following. “Would to God we had never set a foot beyond the Indus; but having done so we appear inextricably involved and no honorable retreat left...were we to abandon Shah Shujah and evacuate the country as it now is; or even if we to...restore Dost Mohammed.” This was the pervading attitude towards the war and the British presence in Afghanistan at the end of 1841.

British governmental worries regarding the viability of their puppet ruler were realized as the news of the disaster in Kabul trickled into London. Public sentiment soon showed distrust in both the government of Lord Auckland and the restoration of Shah Shujah. The resentment of both Shujah and Auckland evident in 1840 and 1841 continued to grow in early 1842.

The strength of these sentiments was evident in The Times’ decision to publish a series of eight Letters to the Editor, concerning the war in Afghanistan by a man signing himself “Civis.” These letters provide an insight into the English public’s ideas regarding the war, their reaction to their government’s policies in Afghanistan and the just revealed circumstances of the government’s decision to invade. As a letter to the editor of The Times revealed, “It can be proved to the British public, who are so purposely kept in the dark as to the reason of these great disaster, that this Afghan [sic] war or policy described as so glorious and so necessary, was unnecessary, unwise and most unjust. [emphasis from The Times]” This is only one example of the public reaction to the reasons, revealed in early 1842, of why the country chose to go to war.

However, although public support for the war was waning, the British continued their military actions in the country. The Bombay Times printed an editorial in May of 1842, which was entitled, “What Will They Think of Us in England?” which contained

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48 Bombay Times North West Provinces Section November 10, 1841.
49 Kaye, 205-213.
50 Bombay Times North West Provinces Section December 15, 1841.
51 Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 201. Evidence of this dissatisfaction can also be seen in a Bombay Times article from the North West Provinces Section February 5, 1842.
52 Times (London) page 5 column 1 March 31, 1842; page 5 column 1 April 6, 1842; page 6 columns 2-3 April 12, 1842; page 4 columns 4-5 April 18, 1842; page 5 column 3 April 23, 1842; page 5 column 5 April 26, 1842; page 5 column 6 and page 6 column 1 April 29, 1842; page 5 column 5 May 10, 1842.
53 Times (London) page 5 columns 3-4 July 4, 1842.
extracts from many Indian journals and newspapers regarding Afghan affairs. The paper wrote, in an editorial note to its readers, “we consider the extracts interesting in another light, as illustrative of the views that has been selected by the press for adoption and laid before the people of England [Times’ emphasis], forming the staple of knowledge as well as speculation on which the inhabitants of Great Britain will hereafter take their stand.”

The newspaper was worried about the reaction of their readers, as well as the public in general, to the continued British actions and following of Lord Auckland’s policies in the region.

By the end of the spring of 1842, Auckland was recalled to Britain and replaced as Governor General of India by Lord Ellenborough. The change in Governor General led to a feeling in Britain that imminent withdrawal of the British army from the country would follow. In October 1842, the British army began preparations for withdrawal from the country. By October 1842, the official proclamation of the British retirement from Afghanistan had been published. Editorials criticizing Lord Auckland’s expansionist policies and praising the decision of Lord Ellenborough to end them were published in the newspapers following the announcement. The Bombay Times of November 23, 1842 reported that the troops had left Afghanistan and were headed back to India. As 1843 began, Afghanistan was no longer considered to be the hot spot of the British Empire, and was relegated to being insignificant in both the British press and governmental policies.

Dost Mohammed regained the throne of Afghanistan at the end of 1842, after the death of Shah Shujah. When the British withdrew from the country, the decision was made to allow the Afghans to pick their own ruler, leading to Dost Mohammed militarily powering his way back onto the throne. Afghanistan regained its status as a minor concern in British foreign policy by 1843, with his reinstatement. Public sentiment regarding Dost Mohammed and Afghanistan by the end of 1843 had reverted back to the conditions before the British decision to invade. The end result of the First Afghan War was basically a restoration to the conditions in the country before the British invasion. The war resulted in no new changes for the country, and was a detriment to the way the British public viewed the policies of their Governor Generals in India.

This discussion of the impact of the First Afghan War serves to ground the more important developments, for the purposes of this analysis, of the Second Afghan War. The political situation in Britain in 1878 was very different from the one faced by Lords Auckland and Ellenborough in the earlier half of the century. Although there were differences in the political situation in Britain, several of the patterns discussed in the first episode in Afghanistan can be seen in the second attempt by the British to occupy the country and gain the upper hand in the region.

By the end of the 1870s, politics regarding the British Empire had once again begun to favor the idea of imperialist gains. The drive to extend the British Empire would lead to the decision to once again invade Afghanistan on a pretext. This second invasion

55 Bombay Times North West Provinces section May 18, 1842.
56 Ibid.
57 Kaye, 282.
58 Bombay Times North West Provinces section, Official Announcement of the Immediate Retirement from Afghanistan October 19, 1842 and North West Provinces section, Lord Ellenborough’s Proclamation October 22, 1842.
59 Norris, 441.
was also motivated by fears of Russian influence in Central Asia. Similar to the First Afghan War, the threat of Russia was not the stated reason for the incursion, but it was nonetheless the preeminent reason for the British decision to invade.\(^{60}\)

The events of the Second Afghan War followed in many ways the pattern established by the First Afghan War. As in their first attempt to rule the country, the British encountered little resistance when first entering the country, made a quick, decisive effort to capture the capital, and then were greeted with a large scale, organized rebellion against their attempts to rule. This pattern, which proved successful for the Afghans in the first war, would once again lead them to victory at the end of the second war.

The basis for the Second Afghan War was a concept which can be categorized at best as insubstantial. The British once again sought an excuse to enter the country and protect India. Like the First Afghan War, this war began when the British wanted to install a friendlier leader in the country. However, also similar to the previous military encounter, the British were unable to install a permanent legitimate leader. As in the first war, the second war also ended in a stalemate. Although both the wars ended in a draw, the reasons which caused the First and Second Afghan Wars were still paramount to British foreign policy. Both wars were complicated by British concerns over the impact of Russia’s influence in central Asia and Afghanistan. The perceived threat of Russia invading the British Empire’s “crown jewel,” India, pervaded the British foreign policy concerns in the region. Britain wanted to continue to ensure that the Russians would not be able to access this pass. In order to safeguard India, it was imperative that Britain have at least a degree of control in Afghanistan as they already claimed.

India was seen as the most important territory owned by the British. The Conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, reinforced this perception by granting Queen Victoria the controversial title of “Empress of India” in 1876. It took almost all of his considerable political reputation and influence in Parliament to allow Victoria this new honor.\(^{61}\) The granting of this title also marked the first time that the term “imperialism” entered into the official British political discourse. Although the British had engaged in colonizing policies for centuries, the granting of the title Empress was the first time that the British government took official control of a title formerly held by another sovereign country. The timing of India being acknowledged as the most important asset to the British Empire was not coincidental. By 1879, Britain would be embroiled in the Second Afghan War over influence in Central Asia and India. However, although Britain and Russia were both interested in the region, the two nations never engaged in open warfare on this question; but were on the brink of military action several times during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The question of Russia would come to dominate discussions of British actions in Afghanistan, regardless of what political party was in power.

At the beginning of the Second Afghan War, the Conservative Party controlled the British Parliament. This control led to Britain’s outwardly imperialist policies, including the decision to invade Afghanistan. This decision came after several years of Russian agitation in the country, beginning at roughly the same time the Conservatives gained control after the elections of 1874. Fears of the impact that Russia could have in

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\(^{60}\) Heathcote, 98-101.

Afghanistan and by extension on India, were reflected in official documents written by the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook. He included the idea that the Russians would be able to influence the ruler of Afghanistan, Amir Sher Ali, to invade India. Although fears regarding the Russians never came to fruition, British perceptions of the threat were not alleviated by further Russian diplomatic maneuvers at the end of the decade.

In the late 1870s a Russian diplomatic mission was deployed to Kabul. As occurred during in the years preceding the First Afghan War, Russia’s envoy was warmly received by a ruler of Afghanistan. This development raised alarms in Britain over a new possibility of Russian involvement in the region. The British had, at the time that the envoy was sent to Kabul, begun to try and improve their relations with Afghanistan, under the new Viceroy in India, Lord Lytton. Lytton’s policies relating the country, including the way he treated the Afghani people and their ruler, Sher Ali, are at least possibly responsible for the ensuing war. Lytton treated Afghanistan as a lesser country, and one which the British had every right to invade as the British were a superior power. His attitude towards Afghanistan was a common one, shared by many members of the British government, as official telegrams attest.

The British attitude regarding Afghanistan is reflected in telegrams sent to and from Lytton and the office of the Secretary of State for India back in London. These telegrams indicate the fear perceived by the British concerning the thought of a Russian invasion, as well as the need to establish their own mission in Kabul. Sent throughout the summer of 1878, these telegrams show the growing worries concerning Russian invasion and the continued need for a British mission. By October, 1878, the British felt that the circumstances in Afghanistan had progressed to the point that an ultimatum needed to be issued to try and bring the Afghani ruler back into agreement. After the Secretary of State for India in London approved the text of this ultimatum, it was telegraphed to Lytton on October 30, 1878. The main goal of the ultimatum was to have a British mission accepted in Kabul. The text of the ultimatum accuses Sher Ali of taking the Russian side in the imminent war between Russia and Britain:

Nevertheless you have now received a Russian Envoy at your capital, at a time when a war was believed to be imminent, in which England and Russia would have been arrayed on opposite sides, thereby not only acting in contradiction to the reasons asserted by you for not receiving a British Mission [that it might lead to a Russian mission being forced on the Afghans], but giving to your conduct the appearance of being actuated by motives inimical to the British Government.

The telegram shows the British disdain for any non-Western ruler. Although tacitly recognizing the sovereignty of Sher Ali, the ultimatum does not recognize his right to determine whether or not to allow a foreign power to provide a representative in his

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63 Forbes, 165-166. Lord Lytton’s attitudes towards the Afghani people will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.
64 Parliamentary Paper no. 66 pg. 254.
65 Ibid.
capital. *The Times* published a letter to the editor in October 1878, entitled, “England, Russia and Afghanistan,” which included a criticism of the British policy in Afghanistan. The policy, which is referred to as one of “masterly inactivity,” is described by an army officer who wrote: “‘Masterly inactivity’ is the expression commonly used to denote the policy which for many years has prevailed. It is a misleading term as it conveys the idea that we have washed our hands of our neighbours’ concerns, whereas the real circumstances are very different…being only anxious to see strong and quiet Governments established on our borders.”66 The failure of Masterly Inactivity, coupled with the rising Russian threat, led to more support for an eventual war in Afghanistan.

Lytton’s brainchild, the policy of masterly inactivity, was begun soon after he came to power in 1876. His strategy of taking a “wait-and-see” attitude towards relations with Afghanistan, followed the ideas espoused by his predecessor, Lord Northbrook. In 1873, Afghanistan had approached Northbrook to negotiate a “definite offensive and defensive alliance,” in the face of the possible Russian invasion. However, this Afghan attempt to gain an alliance with the British was rebuffed.67 The British felt that Afghanistan would not be an effective ally in Central Asia, as they did not trust Sher Ali. Instead, the British believed that if they signed an alliance with Sher Ali, he would turn around and double cross them and also cooperate with the Russians.68 This failed approach for an alliance was the only time in the decade leading up to the Second Afghan War where efforts were made to gain an alliance between the Afghans and the British.

Although the policies implemented by Northbrook and Lytton were partially to blame for the climate of distrust and enmity in Afghanistan, blame must also be placed on the workings of the British parliament at the time. The elections of 1874 forced a change in political goals, from those of the Liberals who advocated a policy of trying to reach an agreement with Russia, to those of the Conservatives who felt that agreement with the Russians was not a high priority and that any agreement reached could not be trusted. The change in government also affected the composition of the India Office, including the Secretary of State. Events in Britain also led to the eventual resignation of Northbrook, the Viceroy who advocated agreement with the Afghanis, and his replacement by Lytton, the man who created the policy of “Masterly Inactivity.”69

Other developments in Britain, following the appointment of Lytton, also impacted British policy on the question of Afghanistan. In 1877, Lord Salisbury, formerly the Secretary of State for India, became the Foreign Secretary for the British Empire. His replacement at the India Office, Lord Cranbrook, had an anti-Russian position, which would prove to be a large factor in the government’s decision to go to war in Afghanistan.70

The contemporary Russo-Turkish war led to the possibility of a war with Russia on European soil.71 This threat to British superiority on the continent of Europe,
combined with the continuing perceived threat to India, added to anti-Russian sentiments already present in the British government. The British feared that the Russo-Turkish war would also motivate Russia to try and involve them in a two front war with open conflict in Central Asia. Tensions between the two empires continued to grow as the Russo-Turkish war progressed. By the end of the war, and the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, Lytton saw a chance to possibly eradicate the Russians from all of Central Asia, including Afghanistan. At the end of August 1878, he sent an expedition to Kabul under the leadership of Sir Neville Chamberlain to try and establish a mission. Although Sher Ali was not in favor of allowing a British mission in his country, initially he had agreed to consider the stationing of a temporary mission. Lytton assumed that his mission would not be rebuffed and sent an expedition, under Chamberlain’s leadership, to establish one. The repulsion of this expedition, which Lytton had unilaterally decided to send to the country without waiting for Sher Ali’s final answer, led to the issuing of the ultimatum of November 2, 1878.

Stefano that led to the continuing enmity between Russia and Britain, since Britain, along with France and Germany, forced many changes into the treaty, causing what had been a military success for the Russians to turn into a diplomatic defeat instead. For more information on the Russo-Turkish war, please see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia, Fifth Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 386-387.

Thompson, 517-518.

Sykes, 107.

Robson, 48-50.

Ewans, 61. The text of the ultimatum, found in Parliamentary Paper No. 10 pg. 20-21 in Papers Dedicated to the Affairs of Afghanistan, is as follows:

“The Viceroy of India to the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, of Kabul, to his Sirdars and subjects, and to all the people of Afghanistan. It is now 10 years since the Ameer Sher Ali Khan, after a prolonged struggle had at last succeeded in placing himself upon the throne of Kabul; at that time his dominion still needed consolidation, and the extent of it was still undefined. In these circumstances the Ameer, who had already been assisted by the British Government with money and with arms, expressed a wish to meet the Viceroy of India; his wish was cordially complied with; he was courteously received and honourably entertained by the Viceroy at Umballa; the countenance and support he had come to seek were then assured to him; he at the same time obtained further unconditional assistance in arms and money. These tokens of the good-will of the British Government, which he gratefully acknowledged, materially aided the Ameer after his return to his own country in their securing his position and extending his authority; since then the Ameer Sher Ali Khan has received from the British Government, in confirmation of its good-will, large additional gifts of arms; the powerful influence of the British Government has secured for him formal recognition by the Emperor of Russia of a fixed boundary between the Kingdom of Kabul and the Khanates of Bokhara and Kokand; the Amir’s sovereignty over Wakhan and Badakshan was thereby admitted and made sure a sovereignty which had till then been disputed by the British Government; his subjects have been allowed to pass freely throughout the Indian Empire, to carry on trade, and to enjoy all the protection afforded by the British Government to its own subjects; in no single instance have they been unjustly or inhospitably treated within British jurisdiction; for all these gracious acts the Ameer Sher Ali has rendered no return, on the contrary he has required them with active ill-will and open discourtesy. The authority over Badakshan, acquired for him by the influence of the British Government, was used by him to forbid passage through that province to a British officer of rank returning from a mission to a neighbouring State; he has closed, against free passage to British subjects and their commerce, the roads between India and Afghanistan; he has maltreated British subjects, and permitted British traders to be plundered within his jurisdiction, giving them neither protection nor redress; he has used cruelly and put to death subjects of his own on the mere suspicion that they were in communication with the British Government; he has openly and assiduously endeavored by words and deeds to stir up religious hatred against the English, and incited war against the Empire of India. Having previously excluded British officers from every part of his dominions, and refused to receive a British mission; having left unanswered friendly communication addressed to him by the
The Eastern Question, as a possible war in Afghanistan was referred to in Britain, was a question of major concern to both the British government and public. As reports concerning the stoppage of Chamberlain’s expedition became public, the British felt that the affront to their nation’s prestige could not go unchecked. This British pride is evident in the policies of the government, demonstrated by this ultimatum. Russian attitudes towards the issuing of this ultimatum included the idea that the British were using perceived insults and hostilities in one part of the world to avenge events which had occurred in another part. Their attitude also led to the feeling that Sher Ali, in refusing the British expedition, was working in a much more calculated manner than his predecessor had in the First Afghan War. Sher Ali’s shrewd decisions would include his decision to not answer the ultimatum in time to prevent British invasion.

The ultimatum provided for war if not answered by November 20, 1878. When that date passed without an answer from Afghanistan, the British prepared for war. War began when three separate British armies invaded the country on the twenty-first. In addition to being better prepared for war than the Afghans, the British were also capable of gaining more troops and supplies both from Britain and from India, which had a shared border with Afghanistan. The opening phases of the war were, following the pattern from the First Afghan War, fairly easy for the British, who did not encounter a great deal of Afghani resistance to their invasion. However, like the First Afghan War, the British invasion of the country would not be as easy as it appeared in the first months of the campaign.

Viceroy, and repelled all efforts towards amicable intercourse between the British Government and himself, he has, nevertheless, received formally and entertained publicly at Kabul an embassy from Russia; this he has done at a time when such an act derived special significance from the character of contemporaneous events in Europe, and the attitude of England and Russia in relation thereto. Furthermore, he has done it well knowing that the Russian Government stands pledged by engagements with England to regard his territories as completely beyond the sphere of Russian influence. Finally, while this Russian envoy of high rank, of whose coming he had formal and timely announcement by a letter from the Viceroy, attesting the importance and urgency of the envoy’s Mission. Even then the British Government, still anxious to avert the calamities of war, deferred hostile action, and proffered to the Ameer a last opportunity of escaping the punishment merited by his acts. Of this opportunity the Ameer has refused to avail himself. It has been the wish of the British Government to find the best security for its Indian frontier in the friendship of a State whose independence it seeks to confirm, and of a Prince whose throne it has helped to support. Animated by this wish, the British Government has made repeated efforts to establish with the Ameer Sher Ali Khan those close and cordial relations which are necessary to the interests of the two neighbouring countries, but its efforts, after being persistently repulsed, have now been met with open indignity and defiance. The Ameer Sher Ali Khan, mistaking for weakness the long forbearance of the British Government, has thus deliberately incurred its just resentment. With the Sirdars and people of Afghanistan this Government has still no quarrel, and desires none. They are absolved from all responsibility from the recent acts of the Ameer, and as they have given no offence, so the British Government, wishing to respect their independence, will not willingly injure or interfere with them, nor will the British Government tolerate interference on the part of any other power in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Upon the Ameer Sher Ali Khan alone rests the responsibility of having exchanged the friendship for the hostility of the Empress of India.”

The full text of the ultimatum is included to indicate the severity of the charges the British levied against Sher Ali, and their perception of his level of disrespect.

76 Manchester Guardian October 2, 1878 pg. 7 column 1. The Manchester Guardian is used as a comparison with The Times as it had a more liberal slant in its coverage of war in Afghanistan.

77 Tanner, 204-205.
The war continued to progress as 1879 began, leading the British to believe that it would be over and won quickly. However, this impression changed significantly in February, 1879, with Sher Ali’s death. He was succeeded by his son, Yakub Khan, who, in May of 1879 negotiated a treaty with the British, ending the first phase of the war. This treaty, which Yakub and Sir Louis Cavagnari, the British representative, negotiated at Gandamak in May 1879, was reported signed on May 27, 1879. The terms of the treaty included the British being given permission to position a permanent resident in Kabul, as well as Yakub agreeing to consult the British in regard to his foreign affairs, in addition to surrendering three territories to direct British control. Once the treaty was signed, events in Afghanistan returned to a semblance of normalcy for the summer months.

The situation became volatile again in September when the British mission at Kabul, headed by Cavagnari, was attacked by Afghani soldiers who decided to mutiny following a period of non-payment by the British. Cavagnari and all the members of the mission were killed in this massacre. As a result of the massacre, and Yakub’s ambivalent reaction to the considerable loss of British life, the British decided to act against Yakub. They forced him to abdicate in late September 1879 as a result of both Cavagnari’s murder and his obvious lack of control of the Afghan people. This abdication left the British in complete control of the country, as there was neither an appointed successor, nor someone who could be considered as a possible ruler of Afghanistan. The de facto ruler of the country became a British officer, Major General Frederick Roberts.

Events in Afghanistan remained calm under Roberts until spring 1880. In April of 1880, Abdur Rahman Khan, a member of Sher Ali’s family was first recommended to become the new ruler of Afghanistan. Although Abdur Rahman was the most qualified ruler present in the country, the British did not initially want him to rule because of their fears regarding his close relationship with Russia. Unfortunately, Abdur Rahman did not ascend to the throne quite as speedily as his compatriots may have wished. He did not officially become Amir until July 22, 1880, when he was recognized by the British in a ceremony outside of Kabul. Once Abdur Rahman was invested in his new position, the British began promising to withdraw their troops as soon as possible, hopefully before the next harsh winter in Afghanistan. Events in Afghanistan remained quiet until the beginning of 1881, when the next phase of the Second Afghan War began.

The question of the Russian influence in Afghanistan began heating up again in early 1881. The letters, which were written before the start of the Second Afghan War, between the Tsar of Russia, Alexander II, and Sher Ali, cited in many newspapers, included “many phrases scattered through the correspondence which can bear only one interpretation, which is that not only was the Amir Shere Ali to be assisted in case of

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78 Robson, 101. Sher Ali died from poor health at age 55 on February 21, 1879. At the end, feeling abandoned by the Russians who did not help him guarantee his country’s independence, Sher Ali refused food and medical aid, choosing to die.
79 Times (London) page 7 column 1 May 27, 1879.
80 For the complete text of the treaty see D.P. Singhal, India and Afghanistan 1876-1907: A Study in Diplomatic Relations (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1963), Appendix E, 196.
81 Sykes, 115.
83 Manchester Guardian page 7 column 1 April 8, 1880.
84 Forbes, 288.
war against the English, but that a part of the plan was to raise rebellion against the Mahomedans [sic] of India.” The articles indicate the Russian government’s willingness to use Sher Ali as an ally against British policy aims. The publishing of these letters, coming at a time when most members of the British public believed that the crisis in Afghanistan had passed, served to reignite anti-Russian passions in Britain.

By the end of 1881, events in Afghanistan had, once again, grown more violent, with battles at Kandahar. These battles were waged by Ayub Khan, Yakub Khan’s younger brother, who was fighting to become the ruler of Afghanistan. The British were surprised by this change in events, and were defeated, at first, by Ayub’s troops. When news of the battle reached Kabul, a larger British force was sent to Kandahar, under the control of Major General Roberts. This force quickly defeated the Afghans led by Ayub, in what has been described as the “crowning British success in a difficult war.”

The British battles in Afghanistan had come to a close, following the actions in Kandahar, with not much gained in the second war. Similarly to the conclusion of the first war, the stated goals of the British had been reached, but conditions in Afghanistan were not very different than they had been at the beginning of the war. The major difference in the country was the installation of Abdur Rahman as the leader of Afghanistan, a shrewd move that served the British well, since he was not, as was first feared, a Russian agent, but instead an Afghani nationalist. The British did not gain any new territory from this war, nor did they gain any riches or any other tangible goals from their large expenditure of money and human lives.

Both of the Afghan wars were unnecessary wars in the eyes of the public. Although the affronts afforded to British dignity, that were used as justifications for each war, were unfortunate and needed to be avenged, the end result of both the first and second wars was a return to conditions as had formerly existed in Afghanistan. Although in both cases, one ruler was deposed and another was installed on the throne by the British, these new rulers were not just puppets. They remained independent, although the Treaty of Gandamak did agree to a reduction of Afghani territory, and to the British gaining control of the country’s foreign affairs. Afghanistan, following the Second Afghan War, was ruled by Abdur Rahman, the first Amir of Afghanistan granted local autonomy by the British. This granting of local autonomy is, as has already been seen, one of the key components in Liberal Imperialism.

The role of Afghanistan in the formation of policies of Liberal Imperialism can only be examined after a thorough understanding of the conditions that existed in the country before, during, and after the Second Afghan War has been attained. It was reactions to the many different facets of these wars that would lead to the Liberal Party’s embrace of new policies in the first years of the 1880s. The leader of their party, William Ewart Gladstone, was essential to this process of discovering new goals of imperialism, a subject which will receive a great deal of attention in the following chapters.

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85 Times (London) page 10 column 2 February 9, 1881.
86 Tanner, 217.
87 Abdur Rahman’s importance to the history of Afghanistan and its role in the British Empire will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER THREE: THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND EVOLVING FOREIGN POLICY

The Second Afghan War is emblematic of problems between Britain and Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. The two countries were involved in an ongoing quest to gain the most influence possible in Central Asia. As the two empires were the most powerful actors in Asia, the quest to rule the region had international ramifications. At the beginning of the Second Afghan War, affairs between Britain and Russia had almost deteriorated to the point of open warfare. Although war would never officially break out as a result of these contacts, the question of influence in Central Asia would remain a sticking point in Anglo-Russian relations for the rest of the century.

Events in Afghanistan, along with those in South Africa, shifted thinking among Liberal politicians in Britain. The previously covered events of the Second Afghan War, and the failure of the government to successfully draw the war to a close, led to the idea that imperialist ideas had to change in order for Britain to retain a degree of control in the country. Before the Second Afghan War began, the British government also tried to compensate for failures resulting from the Zulu War, fought in South Africa. With these disappointments in mind, the Liberal Party came to recognize that it needed to change imperial policies from the traditional, invasion oriented ideas of the early and mid-nineteenth century, to a new, gentler, form of imperialism, with limited local autonomy, the system espoused after 1880 by the British government.

The “Great Game” between Russia and Britain was fought over many issues. However, the crux of the conflict involved British perceptions of Russia’s need for a warm water port and more access to lands which were further south than its current boundaries. At the same time, the British wanted to ensure the protection of their most valuable domain, India. The situation between the two countries began to worsen when Russia continued her extension into Central Asia, and took over formerly independent states close to Afghanistan.

These Russian intrigues in the region would ultimately become a factor in all British policy decisions regarding Central Asia, although the first time that this Russian influence became a factor in British foreign policy was at the time of the Eastern European conflict known as the Bulgarian atrocities. This conflict, known to the British as a phase “Eastern Question,” marked the first time that the situation between Britain and Russia received extensive coverage in the British press.88

This phase of the “Eastern Question” began in 1876, at roughly the same time as Afghanistan was beginning to receive press coverage for the first time since the First Afghan War ended in 1842. Following the end of the First Afghan War, politics between Russia and Britain returned to the state they had been at the beginning of the war, that of

88 The Eastern Question was a way the British referred to some of the events from the Russo-Turkish War, including the atrocities committed against Bulgarians by the Turks. Although the events which would later be characterized as the Eastern Question would last until 1923, most British historians only mean the Bulgarian atrocities when the term Eastern Question is invoked. For more information on the Russian side of the question, including the events after the British ended their involvement in Afghanistan, see A.L. Macfie, The Eastern Question 1774-1923, Revised Edition (Longman: London, 1996).
an uneasy truce. Relations between Britain and Russia remained amicable until after the “Eastern Question” first received coverage in the national press of Britain, leading to a public outcry against the Turks for their treatment of the Bulgarians. There was also a perception in Britain that Russian inactivity regarding the situation worsened it considerably. The agitation between Britain and Russia was also reflected in press coverage of Russian actions near Afghanistan. Both The Times and The Manchester Guardian covered this slowly developing situation between over who would have the greater influence in Central Asia. The most important aspect of this power struggle was the determination of who would control Afghanistan.

Britain faced this power struggle as the imperial crises were rising in Central Asia and Bulgaria during 1876. An article, first published in The Times of India and re-printed in The Times addresses the situation in Afghanistan in 1874, when the Conservative government regained leadership of the country. A rebellion, led by the son of the late Dost Mohammed, resulted in turmoil in the country. This turmoil led The Times of India to editorialize: “We can only look forward to a long period of anarchy, confusion, and civil war...it has been the policy of the British Government during the last 20 years to build up as a bulwark between India and the Russian possessions in Central Asia.”

This recognition of the possibility of chaos in Afghanistan by a newspaper is remarkable, since British policies were not yet addressing the idea of a Second Afghan War when The Times of India made its prediction.

After this rebellion was crushed, Afghanistan was temporarily relegated to a lesser status in British foreign policy decision making. Instead, in the years from 1876 to 1878, Parliamentary debates between the Conservative and Liberal Parties centered on this “Eastern Question.” This debate, lasting for several years, provided an opportunity for both sides to explain their foreign policy to the general public through the press. One of the favored outlets for expressing policy initiatives was in the print media. Both political parties took advantage of lower printing costs, and a greater ability of most Britons to read, in order to spread their message concerning the policies of the other side.

As both the Times and the Guardian strove to make clear to the public, the Conservative Party supported a strong imperial policy. The “Eastern Question” is one area where this imperialist bias is easily seen. Conservative policies were supported by the public as can be evidenced in a letter to the editor, originally published in the Sheffield Journal, but reprinted by the Times. The author of this letter praises these policies, and mentions that he had “spoken to many of the leading members of the Liberal

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90 The Times refers to the London Times, as it was known by this name in the nineteenth century. The Manchester Guardian was contemporarily referred to as The Guardian and these two terms will be interchangeable in this paper.

91 For more information on the actions of Dost Mohammed, see Chapter Two.

92 “Afghanistan,” Times (London) page 10 column 2 May 26, 1874.

93 Using press coverage to determine the foreign policy goals of the British Empire provides an invaluable tool for researchers to see what the British public was being told regarding their government’s actions in foreign countries. However, the biases of the printed media must be taken into account when studying decisions regarding whether to print a certain article. For more information on media biases, see Koss, 46 (The Times) and Koss, 61 (The Manchester Guardian).

94 Printed media refers to contemporary newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets.
Party, and I [the author] have found no one approving of the language used by Mr. Gladstone [in a recent speech on the Eastern Question]. The letter continues by criticizing the Liberal Party’s lack of understanding of Russian history, concluding with the following statement on the Russian policy regarding areas covered in the Eastern Question, “a policy which at the present time seriously imperils British interests, and which it will require unanimity in England to hold in check.” This Russian policy of advancing its influence in Bulgaria would prove to be the bane of the Conservative Party during their term in office. The party would be forced to contend with these Russian policies of expansion while trying to ensure that the British Empire in general and India in particular, remained strong.

At the same time as editorials and letters to the editor regarding the Eastern Question appeared, the Conservative Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, was embroiled in a mini-scandal regarding the press and Russia. A Russian newspaper, Golos, printed an article claiming that Disraeli involved the British Empire in the Eastern Question because he would profit from the Bosnian rebellion and war between Serbia and Turkey. The paper also accused him of not being able to admit his true motives for including Britain in the Eastern Question. However, The Manchester Guardian voiced a dissenting opinion in its editorial from the day that the story of the Golos article appeared. The most important thought in this editorial is seen in the last two sentences. Although the editors may not have realized how prophetic their words would be, the ending to the editorial reaches into the future, speaking about the problems between Russia and Britain, arguing that: “the attack of the Golos is only interesting as showing how little one country may know of the habits and institutions of another. Unfortunately it is out of ignorance of this kind that a large part of the danger of the present political situation [Britain and Russia on the brink of war] arises.”

Disraeli’s reaction to his defamation by The Golos was covered by both The Times and the Manchester Guardian. Neither paper was willing to let the issue fade into the background, but instead focused on the aftermath of the incident for the next several days. Although The Times relegated coverage of the incident to its back pages, the editors still saw it necessary to mention that a Russian envoy visited Disraeli to specifically apologize for the Golos’ error in judgment regarding their decision to print the story, “At the express desire of the Czar, his Excellency Count Schouvaloff recently called on Lord Beaconsfield to express the utter repudiation by the Imperial Government of the attack made by the Golos on the Prime Minister, and the personal offence and indignation felt by the Czar at the article in question.”

Although his reaction to the Golos incident was mild, Disraeli, as the personification of the Conservative Party, was closely watched to see what his party’s reactions to foreign affairs would be. He was regarded as a confusing man by the press, and thus his personal feelings on foreign issues, such as the Eastern Question, were hard

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95 “Lord Beaconsfield and the Golos,” Times (London) page 9 columns 1-2 October 24, 1876. Mr. Gladstone refers to the then-former Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone.
96 Ibid.
97 The newspaper was a semi-official journal, which was sanctioned by the Russian government.
98 Editorial, The Manchester Guardian October 25, 1876, pg. 5 col. 3-4.
99 Ibid.
100 Disraeli was made Lord Beaconsfield by Queen Victoria in August of 1876; Editorial, Times (London) page 7 column 5 October 31, 1876.
to gauge. As *The Guardian* stated in December 1877, “Lord Beaconsfield is sometimes spoken of as a mysterious and Sphinx-like person, an inscrutable being whom no one can unravel. His intentions are thought to be beyond conjecture and his ways of bringing them to pass unfathomable.”

This article describes the Eastern Question and Disraeli’s decisions regarding the delicate issue. However, his feelings on the Eastern Question were quite hard for the press to determine, as the article indicates. In reality, Disraeli and the Conservative Party saw the conflict as an important one, but not one in which the British could directly intervene. Their attitude towards the conflict would not change from the basic principle of no direct intervention, although the comments offered regarding the Eastern Question would change over the course of the event.

At the beginning of 1878, the situation between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia was once again heating up, with dispatches sent from Lord Lytton, the Viceroy in India, indicating that a Russian envoy had been dispatched to Kabul. A speech of Disraeli’s referenced in a letter to the editor printed in *The Times* included the Conservative Party’s view on the Russian advance in Central Asia, “I am not of that school who view the advance of Russia in Asia with that deep misgiving which some do. I think that Asia is large enough for the destinies of both Russia and England.”

Although the sentiments expressed in this speech are admirable, actions in the region left much to be desired.

However, before Britain and Russia could continue their imperial advancements in Central Asia, this phase of the Eastern Question was solved, by the treaty of San Stefano. The Conservative Party finally defined their policy regarding the Eastern Question in a speech given by Benjamin Disraeli at the end of July, 1878: “In future Englishmen are to have but one policy on the Eastern Question. It is his own…the pretention appears somewhat excessive, but LORD BEACONSFIELD has pledged our future in advance [on the Eastern Question].”

The British felt that the Eastern Question was finally ended after the Congress of Berlin, with British involvement, worked out the terms of a peace treaty between the Russians and the Turks in July 1878.

With the Bulgarian section of the Eastern Question ended at the Congress of Berlin, British foreign policy regarding Russia began to focus on the country’s intentions regarding Afghanistan. Lord Lytton, the Viceroy in India, seized the opportunity provided by the end of the Russo-Turkish War to stage an invasion of Afghanistan. This invasion, although tacitly sanctioned by the Conservative government in London, would lead to the Second Afghan War. Criticisms of Lytton’s decision to advance into Afghanistan included the idea that the government was willing to allow Lytton’s “forward” policy in Afghanistan, as long as everything went well.

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104 For more information on the Treaty of San Stefano, see Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson, eds. *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902) or Selected Documents Old and New* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1938), 357-380.
107 Blake, 660-661.
It was in some extent a reaction to the failures of the Conservative Party’s Afghan policies that the former Liberal Party Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone, chose to become re-involved in British politics. His Liberal Party won the 1880 election, partially because of the issue of the war in Afghanistan. Gladstone and the Liberal Party made Afghanistan one of the major points of contention in the campaign. He used Afghanistan in his famous speeches made at Midlothian, including his oft-repeated quote: “Remember the rights of the savage, as we call him. Remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own.” With this speech, printed in all the country’s newspapers, Gladstone clearly defined his policies regarding Afghanistan.

A pamphlet by a former Under-Secretary of State for India, Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, published during the election campaign in 1880, contained anti-Disraeli vitriol. The author clearly identifies more with the Liberal Party, even though he never officially declares his party affiliation. Although Grant Duff is careful to include the fact that the Liberal government was unable to pass all of the blame for the problem in Afghanistan, he does make it clear that the Liberal government was the first to realize impending problem caused by Russian expansion into Central Asia, “The Liberals and not the Conservatives who took the initiative in calling the attention of the country, through the House of Commons, to the advance of Russia in Central Asia.”

In addition to allotting credit to the Liberal Party for recognizing Russian advancement, Duff also directs attention to the problems caused by the Conservative government. He includes a statement clearly showing his bias against the Conservative Party, to the extent that he accuses Disraeli of policies leading to a breakdown in the dialogue between Britain and Russia. He wrote, in his pamphlet, The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government and Its Results, the following condemnation of Disraeli’s actions regarding Russia: “The Beaconsfield Government has by its own act completely altered the aspect of affairs under which Russia bound herself to Mr. Gladstone’s Government, and has broken down every conventional barrier to her advance. The outbreak of a war could have done no less.”

As the Second Afghan War progressed, the question of Russian interference in Afghanistan became less important to the British. However, this position would only last until the end of 1881, when, after the British were surprised by Afghan revolt at Kandahar, they were suddenly forced to contend with an unsuccessful military encounter in the country. Summaries of events in Kandahar were telegraphed to the India Home Office in London, leading to agitated responses from Lord Hartington, the Secretary of State for India. His letters, sent to Lord Ripon, the Viceroy in India, indicate fears that Russia would become involved in Afghanistan once again. These fears were partially alleviated by talk of an Anglo-Russian treaty regarding Afghanistan.

111 Ibid, 36.
112 Lord Ripon was appointed to the position of Viceroy of India by Queen Victoria, after Gladstone made
The thought of an Anglo-Russian treaty which addressed the question of Afghanistan first was raised in fall 1881. Hartington and Ripon, as the government’s top officials on questions regarding India, had several discussions reflected in their correspondence on the issue of whether or not Russia would sign a treaty that demarcated the borders of Afghanistan. Hartington wrote to Ripon, on the subject of a possible treaty, “Whether our position would not be made known if Russia refused or made difficulties about a Treaty; and whether the Treaty itself would be of any real use if Russia found it for her advantage as on the last occasion to raise difficulties for us by intrigues or actual interference in Afghan affairs.” The letter continues by enumerating other difficulties faced in relations with Russia, including introducing the idea of Russia using Afghanistan to invade India.

The problems between Russia and Britain over Afghanistan continued to be addressed in official correspondence as 1882 began. By March of that year, Hartington wrote to Ripon, regarding a proposed treaty, “I pledge us to active resistance in case of a Russia advance into Afghanistan [sic]; but I do not see how after what I have said on that subject, I can stop short of this.” The attitude held by Hartington is also reflected in memos written by Gladstone on Russian involvement in Afghanistan.

Official British policy regarding Afghanistan was transformed after Gladstone became Prime Minister. One of the Liberal Party’s major concerns regarding Afghanistan was the removal of British troops from the country. Gladstone wrote to his Secretary of State, Hartington, on the issue of troop removal, “But neither of these, I think, is the case and it is even likely that we can not judge our position and duty definitively, until you have got the troops out of Afghanistan.” The Liberal Party’s priority in removing the troops from Afghanistan, although laudable, was in direct opposition to the events as they unfolded over the next two years in the still contested country.

The Second Afghan War was not an isolated event in British imperial politics. Instead, it indicated the beginnings of a change in the goals and implementation of future British foreign policies. Patterns seen in the case of Afghanistan are also apparent in other British imperial projects of the late nineteenth century, including concurrent British actions in Africa, as the events of the Zulu War indicate. Both wars began with an invasion begun by a British official who was not specifically authorized to wage war. The following recommendation to her: “Mr. Gladstone also humbly advises Your Majesty to appoint the Marquis of Ripon to be Viceroy of India.” Letter from Gladstone to Queen Victoria, London April 26, 1880, printed in Philip Guedalla, The Queen and Mr. Gladstone (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1934), 459.

113 British foreign policy at the time included Afghanistan as a consideration in governmental policies regarding India.

114 Letter from Lord Hartington to Lord Ripon, November 11, 1881, British Library Additional Manuscript 43567.

115 Letter from Lord Hartington to Lord Ripon, March 3, 1882, British Library Additional Manuscript 43568. Hartington’s official correspondence clearly indicates that he is biased against Russia when it comes to the subject of Afghanistan. Other comments he made in the early months of 1882 include ideas that Russia cannot be trusted, especially on the topic of her continued advances towards India.

116 Gladstone’s moral objections and opinions to the British invasion of Afghanistan will be examined in Chapter Four. For the purposes of this chapter, all references to Gladstone will only be to his official policies.

117 Letter from Gladstone to Hartington June 9, 1880 (copy of) British Library Additional Manuscript 44145.
resulting imperial failures in both cases, led to a lack of support for imperialism in Britain. The need for a new imperial policy was an inevitable concept by 1881, when the Second Afghan War concluded. However, this idea would never have become popular without the impact of the Zulu War.

In 1877, the British government became involved in a conflict with the Zulu tribe sparked by the actions of the Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner for South Africa, Sir Bartle Frere. Frere’s imperial ambitions, like those of his contemporary in the Disraeli administration, Lord Lytton, led to a policy of expansion, similar to the one followed by the British in Afghanistan. “Frere believed that the power of the Zulus would have to be destroyed before the internal security of the South African colonies could be assured.” As in the case of Afghanistan, where Russia was seen as an outside aggressor who threatened the security of a British colony, in the South African situation, the Zulus were seen as an outside threat to the security of the empire.

Even tactics used to justify British incursion into formerly sovereign territory were similar to those used to justify the Afghan experience. Similar to the case in Afghanistan, an ultimatum was issued which forced the involvement of British troops with the Zulus, leading to all out warfare. When the Zulus went to war, the British forces were quickly overpowered at the beginning, but eventually, after bringing in several thousand troops, were able to emerge victorious from the conflict.

Nevertheless, there were some conditions which differed in military decisions regarding Afghanistan and South Africa. Disraeli did not approve of Frere’s choice to use military force against the Zulus, however he did agree that South Africa should be confederated, and brought into the empire, but not by the sword, as his appointed Governor had envisioned. This reluctance to support the use of force against the Zulus is one area where Conservative strategy for South Africa was overruled by an overzealous official in the colony. Disraeli’s reaction to the predicament his government found itself in as a result of Frere’s activities, exposes a lack of advance planning in his party’s imperial policies. His anger, at this unauthorized war supports the idea that Disraeli’s imperialist aims were not always well defined, “Disraeli considered that his whole foreign policy was thrown into jeopardy by this inopportune call on British reserves, while the cost was all too likely to damage the national finances.”

Disraeli chose to take a more indirect approach to problems occuring in his country’s expanding empire. He was forced to accept decisions made by both Lytton and Frere, and his administration “found [itself] more than once in an awkward position of having…to accept and support policies which they disapproved and men who had disobeyed or disregarded them.” Disraeli’s government, although not technically responsible for the imperial policies espoused by their Viceroy or General, was forced to

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119 Eldridge, 204.
120 Ibid., 198-200.
122 Blake, 670.
place the full might of the British government behind misguided imperialist aims in order to save the prestige of the empire.

British experiences in South Africa, combined with the failures of British policy in Afghanistan, led to a gradual decision in the Liberal Party that changes needed to be made in British imperial policies. The Liberals used the Zulu War in their indictment of the Conservative Party in the election campaign of 1880, “further fuel had been added to the Liberal charge of misguided ambition for territorial aggrandizement, and Gladstone included the Zulu war in his general indictment of the extravagant policies typical of ‘Beaconsfieldism.’”

In his campaign against Disraeli, Gladstone cited the policies of Frere as examples of imperial problems in both Afghanistan and South Africa. Frere and Gladstone carried out a heated correspondence over Gladstone’s use of Frere’s policies in his invective against his long term political rival during the electoral campaign of 1880. One letter written by Frere to Gladstone included the following statement regarding Gladstone’s use of his policies against Disraeli:

I argued in 1874 in favour of a policy which should secure for us a firm friendship with the Afghans such as would enable them to support their own position independently of Russian or other foreign aid…What views I might have held, or what advice I might have given some years after, when all circumstances had materially changed, I have not discussed, and will not now discuss, for they cannot affect the justice or injustice of what you said in 1879.

Frere is referring to Gladstone’s famous Midlothian speech, which included references to Afghanistan and South Africa, and a personally disparaging comment on his activities. Frere, who was appointed by Disraeli, is used by Gladstone as another example of Conservative imperialists who believed that the only way to secure the future of British imperial superiority was by expanding the empire to the largest dimensions possible.

In his famous Midlothian speech, Gladstone addresses the issue of Afghanistan directly after condemning his predecessor’s activities in South Africa. He is succinct and to the point regarding the Zulu War in this famous speech, where he proclaimed: “We have made war upon the Zulus. We have thereby become responsible for their territory; and not only this, but we are now…about to make war upon a chief lying to the northward of the Zulus; and Sir Bartle Frere…has announced in South Africa that it will be necessary for us to extend our dominions until we reach the Portuguese frontier to the north. So much for Africa.” Gladstone believed that these imperialist aims of the British government were cause for alarm, as a Conservative government would not be satisfied, in his opinion, until they controlled a large share of both Africa and Asia.

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124 Eldridge, 200.
125 Letter from Sir Bartle Frere to William Gladstone, October 20, 1881 in the British Library Additional Manuscript 44472. Frere and Gladstone had a contentious correspondence which included entries on both Afghanistan and South Africa. The argument which this quote is a part of began in September 1881 and continued through their letters until the beginning of November 1881.
British involvement in South Africa did not end with the resolution of the Zulu War, although events in the country were not a major concern through the end of the Gladstone administration of 1880-1885. The placement of South Africa as a compliment to Afghanistan is nevertheless important to an understanding of changing Liberal policies in the aftermath of the Second Afghan War. The Liberal Party regarded the Zulu War as an example of a Conservative policy which was no longer effective in achieving British imperial goals. This perception led to the Zulu War being seen as an unnecessary, large expenditure in both economic and military terms.\textsuperscript{127}

Historiography on British imperialism includes both the Zulu War and the Second Afghan War in discussions of the final elements of “old” imperialism. These two imperial conflicts, occurring simultaneously on separate continents, involving similar tactics of British misinterpretation of events occurring thousands of miles away from their home office in London, with rebellious officials in charge, effectively sounded the death knell for the traditional British concepts of empire. They also heralded the beginnings of a new concept of empire, which can be seen in events occurring at the end of the Gladstone administration in 1885.\textsuperscript{128} Several patterns are evident in the events of the Zulu and Afghan Wars. However, most historians choose to focus either on one war or the other, with the majority of historians examined in the following pages concentrated in analyzing imperial progress in Afghanistan, not South Africa.

Woodruff Smith sees British expansion into Zulu territories as a way to “advance the idea of empire in the British public mind.”\textsuperscript{129} However, he continues, that the British government was forced to face the consequences of the expansion and its failure in South Africa. In his analysis, Smith argues: “Even its [British imperialism’s] failure in South Africa did not dampen the enthusiasm of many politicians and interest groups for imperialism as a domestic political tool.”\textsuperscript{130} The emphasis placed on imperialism as a domestic instead of international policy tool, marks one of the changes to imperialism that Gladstone reacted to in his Midlothian speeches. This “new” imperialism, with its ability to be used as a domestic tool, although begun by Disraeli at the end of his final term in Parliament, became a hallmark of Liberal policies, including the ones which would eventually evolve into those of Liberal Imperialism.

Historians disagree about which imperial event, the Zulu War or the Second Afghan War had more importance to overall British foreign policy decisions. Most historians have chosen to attempt to inter-relate the two military engagements, using language such as, “There had been an Afghan and a Zulu war, both attended with spectacular disaster.”\textsuperscript{131} The author of this quote, A.P. Thornton, follows the trend of trying to cover both wars in one section of analysis. Thornton is not alone in attempting to unify the events and political impact of these two wars. One of Disraeli’s biographers, Robert Blake, entitles an entire chapter of his work, “Afghans and Zulus.”\textsuperscript{132} This chapter

\textsuperscript{127} Eldridge, 198.
\textsuperscript{128} For more information on the end of Gladstone’s administration, including the impact that his resignation will have on Afghanistan, see Chapter Six.
\textsuperscript{129} Woodruff Smith, \textit{European Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries} (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1982), 95.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Blake, Chapter 28, “Afghans and Zulus,” 655-679.
analyzes the two different paths that the military conflicts took with these two very
different sovereign peoples whose land the Beaconsfield government chose to invade.
Blake includes sections which relate the two wars together, including a discussion of the
reasons why Disraeli did not want to invade the Zulu’s territory, “The Cabinet was
dismayed at this prospect [of a Zulu War]. An Afghan War now seemed certain.”\(^{133}\)

However, another author who wrote a meta-history of British imperialism,
Bernard Porter, chose to highlight the events of the Second Afghan War before beginning
his study on the Zulu War. Although Porter includes both wars in the same chapter, he
covers Afghanistan first, as events in the country indicated that as the threat to India
perceived by the British, is more important than the threat to the empire posed by Zulu
insurrection near South Africa.\(^{134}\) He does lend equal gravity to both military encounters,
but the threat of Russia is a pervading theme in his late nineteenth century imperial
analysis.

The juxtaposition of these two encounters is seen in several other historians work
on the Second Afghan War and the Zulu War. Another of Disraeli’s biographers, Sarah
Bradford, uses Gladstone’s Midlothian Speech to analyze Disraeli’s policies on both
Afghanistan and South Africa.\(^{135}\) She sees the speech as an opportunity to both support
Disraeli’s imperialist tendencies and explain how Gladstone was able to use Disraeli’s
imperialist aims against him. This choice of speech to analyze the two wars is important
as even Disraeli’s biographers saw that the only way to examine the two wars was to see
them in conjunction.

One of the most effective historians who chose to combine the two wars is C.C.
Eldridge. In the section of his book entitled “Disraeli’s Imperial Ideas,” Eldridge
examines the Zulu War and how the actions of Frere could be compared with the actions
of Lytton in Afghanistan.\(^{136}\) Although he is not the first historian to address these issues,
Eldridge takes a fair and balanced approach to the conflicts, as he supports Disraeli and
Gladstone equally, allocating the same amount of balanced coverage to each leader.
Eldridge focuses on the imperial ideas of both men, and is not biased towards either the
Conservative or Liberal Parties.

Questions of Afghanistan and the Zulu War are important in conceptualizing
British foreign policy at the beginning of Gladstone’s term in the office of Prime
Minister. Although the Second Afghan War was at a standstill, and the Zulu War had
concluded, the failures of these military encounters would come to determine the policy
followed by the Liberal Party in regards to imperial military engagements through the
middle of 1885.\(^{137}\)

Liberal Policies regarding imperialism also evolved as a result of lessons learned
from events in the First and Second Afghan Wars. In an overall analysis of the results of
these two invasions of Afghanistan, several patterns become apparent to British foreign
policies. The country occupies a vital position in transformations of British imperialism.

\(^{133}\) Blake, 669.
York: Longman, 1996); Afghanistan: “India’s Frontiers and Russian Expansion,” 84-89; and Zulu War:
\(^{136}\) Eldridge, Chapter 7 “Disraeli’s Imperial Ideas” part 6, 196-205.
\(^{137}\) For more information on military engagements after 1885, see Chapter Six, which includes changing
Liberal Imperialist policies.
As the conclusions of the Afghan Wars proved, the British both underestimated their enemies, and refused to end the situation without at least a nominal presence in the country following the end of their militaristic endeavors. If the British had learned their lesson at the conclusion of the First Afghan War, regarding the appointment of a Resident to Kabul, then the problems of the Second Afghan War would more than likely have been averted. However, the British chose not to surrender any claims to the country after the First Afghan War, and the continued British insistence of their tenuous claims to the territory would remain a thorny issue in discussions of British foreign policy for the next fifty years, culminating in the imperialist actions of Lord Lytton leading to the Second Afghan War.138

These policies, which either indirectly or directly, caused the Second Afghan War, were still recommended in British official discourse at the end of that war. At the end of the First Afghan War, British foreign policy still allowed for the Governors on the ground in a colony or other imperial territory to make final decisions regarding invasion of territories located outside of their direct control.139 As the cases of Lytton and Frere show, this continued choice to grant the control of territorial expansion to Governors was a costly one for the British.

In addition to the decision not to change the level of direct power granted to Governors, several other changes might have been possible after the conclusion of the First Afghan War. Before the first war even commenced, British policy in Central Asia had been criticized for problems it caused in the region. The events in Sind, located in territory known as the North-West Foreign Provinces of India, heralded changes that would come back to haunt the British Empire for decades to come. These changes are evident in the continuing evolution of British Central Asian policies, including the impact that policies regarding Afghanistan had on decisions regarding India.

Events in Central Asia were first addressed by the British in policies begun at the beginning of the 1830s regarding Sind. Long before Aukland ever arrived as Governor General in India and had the idea to control Afghanistan in an attempt to safeguard the Khyber Pass and entry into India, Russia’s impact on India was already being discussed in the British corridors of power. As Kenneth Bourne writes in his work on British Foreign Policy, “In October 1829 the publication of…Practicability of an Invasion of British India awakened the Wellington Government to the potential dangers on the north-west frontier and although it was its successors…which earned all the blame later, it was that Government which consciously initiated the policy of counter-penetration of Central Asia which led to the first unhappy Afghan War and the uneasy annexation of the Sind.”140 The British government had struggled with conditions in Central Asia for over fifty years by the beginning of the Second Afghan War. However, in Bourne’s examination of the conditions which led to the conflicts in 1838 and 1878, British policy had already failed in the decade before the First Afghan War.

Bourne was not alone in his perception of failures in British foreign policy during the years leading to the First Afghan War. A historian of that war, John Norris also commented on the need of the British to control Afghanistan resulting from Russian

138 For a discussion on these imperialist actions, see Chapter Two.
139 Thornton, 120-121.
pressure. He explains that the situation in Central Asia which caused the First Afghan War was not only related to this British need for control, but that it also directly stemmed from a lack of clarity in the British ambitions towards the region. This lack of clarity would continue to be a major factor in British foreign policy decisions in Central Asia, as the policy of “Masterly Inactivity,” from the early 1870s indicates.

Norris is not the only historian who examines the causes of war in Central Asia. Although all historians who study the British in Afghanistan agree that the final decisions regarding invading the country are always motivated by fears of Russian aggression, several historians disagree on why these fears were perceived by consecutive British governments. All histories of war in Afghanistan begin with at least a short analysis of the list of Russian actions undertaken in the country. Even works focusing solely on the Second Afghan War, like Brian Robson’s, include a chapter on the events which the Russians were charged with perpetrating in the early and middle nineteenth century. Although this chapter does not focus solely on the Russian threat to the country, Robson includes the idea of a Russian threat to India in his list of causes for the British to invade Afghanistan.

Over-emphasis on the threat of Russia to the British Empire is one of the enduring themes which arose out of the First Afghan War. Historians are in agreement that British failures from this war were among the leading causes for the failure of the second. The disappointment which would eventually result from these failed British military endeavors, led to discussions of a re-envisioning of the government’s imperial goals. “New” ideas of imperialism resulted from this re-emphasis on the changing needs of British policy. The failures which motivated this rethinking regarding the empire, received a large amount of coverage in histories of both Afghanistan and the Second Afghan War.

Although several dozen histories of Afghanistan have been written following recent events in the country, most historians do not give much attention to British involvement in Central Asia. One historian who chose to focus on the British involvement in Afghanistan was Sir Percy Sykes. Sykes’ history was written in 1940, when people who remembered the British invasion of Afghanistan were still alive. In his two volume work, Sykes devotes fifteen chapters to a discussion on the Afghani-British events in the region. As Sykes is a British citizen, and his country was involved in a

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144 In order to gain a more complete understanding of how this event was perceived in these historiographies of the conflict, three examples of both genres will be analyzed.
145 Many histories of Afghanistan begin with Russian and Soviet invasions of the country, and several historians only focus on Afghanistan as emblematic of problems during the Cold War. In addition, several historians, including Martin Ewans, Stephen Tanner, and Karl Meyer have revised their works on the country to include the impact of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent military actions taken by the United States.
war when his work was published, the tone his book takes in his summation of the events of the Second Afghan War is one of pride in the British handling of the situation, “British honour was vindicated and British prestige, that invaluable asset of Empire, was restored, and on that note the Second Afghan War, by which Russian intrigues had been defeated and a strong ruler set on the throne of Afghanistan, was brought to a successful conclusion.” Sykes is unable to see the policies enacted by his government in any light but a favorable one. His inability to further embrace possible British culpability in the war makes his work on Afghanistan biased towards British successes, but the work is still valuable in that Sykes delves into every possible facet of British involvement in the country.

In comparison to Sykes’ work on Afghanistan, Martin Ewan’s history of Afghanistan provides a much more balanced overview of the country’s entire history. Allowing his readers to gain a more complete idea of the conditions in Afghanistan before the involvement on European empires in the country, Ewan places a lesser degree of emphasis on British involvement in the country. His work, written in 2002, benefits from over one hundred years of hindsight regarding British involvement in Afghanistan. Ewan’s perception of the end of the Second Afghan War is less flattering towards the British government, “The cost to British India of the Second Anglo-Afghan War was of the same order of magnitude as that of the first.” Ewan ends his chapter regarding the end of the war with a quotation from a letter written by Lord Hartington in 1880. Hartington’s statement was quite negative towards the end of the war, including his feelings towards the purpose of the war: “all that has yet been accomplished has been the disintegration of the State which it was desired to see strong, friendly, and independent, the assumption of fresh and unwelcome liabilities in regard to one of its provinces, and a condition of anarchy throughout the remained of the country.” By ending his chapter with this quotation, Ewans hopes to make his readers better understand failures of British policies in Afghanistan, in the larger context of the country’s history.

Another attempt towards a complete history of Afghanistan is by Stephen Tanner. His work on the country is purely military history, lacking even mention of any social impact the armed forces had on the country. Sykes and Ewans both focus on the people of Afghanistan and how their culture was affected by the coming of the British, but Tanner does not include this aspect of the invasion. Instead, he solely includes descriptions of battles, and quotations from British soldiers who were involved in the military incursion. Tanner employs language in his analysis critical of the British, “As a sequel, the second Anglo-Afghan conflict relates to the first much like a John Wayne movie compares to Gone With the Wind. Bereft of idealism, or even the naïveté that had once caused both sides to grope for years between the imperatives of honor, patriotism, and survival, the second war was an act of bullying on the part of a greater power against the lesser.” With this remark, made at the beginning of his section on the Second Afghan War, Tanner virtually dismisses the conflict as an act of aggression by one

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147 Sykes, 150.
149 Ibid.
150 Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan: A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 204.
soverign country on another. His dismissal of the war quickly leads to the next chapter in his work, which focused on the actions taken by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Interestingly, Tanner does not try to draw any comparisons between the Russian threat during the Second Afghan War and the Soviet threat to the country nearly a century later. By the lack of attention devoted to the British experience, Tanner sees the Soviet Union’s actions in the country as a subject that deserved more study than the British invasion of a sovereign country.

Tanner’s inclusion of British actions in Afghanistan reads more like a historical footnote: he included the British solely because they were another imperial power that was involved in the region, but he does not include extensive analysis of the goals or ramifications of the British experience. This is anathema to historians who see the Second Afghan War as vital in understanding Anglo-Russian relations, and in their conclusions regarding the end of the war, enumerate British failures in the region. One of the more well known histories of the British experience in Afghanistan is written by T.A. Heathcote. Heathcote’s survey of wars in the country includes the skirmish between India and Afghanistan in 1919. Heathcote includes his opinion on the end of the Second Afghan War, which he considered to be a significant, but ultimately unsuccessful event: “A few former Afghan districts in Baluchistan were gained, but both the Khyber Pass and the Kurram valley were in effect abandoned to the tribes. The inhabitants of Afghanistan had been given every reason to hate the British, and a ruler had emerged at Kabul who was no more likely to become a British ally than his predecessor.” With his inclusion of this statement, Heathcote concludes his analysis of the Second Afghan War in a vein similar to that of Ewans, ending his meditations on a less than positive note. He places blame on the British for their ineffective conclusion to the war. All the British gained from over half a century of involvement in Afghanistan, according to Heathcote, was a few measly districts, and in his opinion, years of grief in the affairs of the region.

Brian Robson ends his study of the Second Afghan War with a chapter entitled, “Results and Reflections.” In this section, he addresses the overall impact of the war, including whether going to war was in the end beneficial to the British Empire. The final paragraph of Robson’s work details the meager benefits of British involvement in Afghanistan as compared to the question of Russian involvement in Central Asia: “The war had, in the first place, defined the stakes for which the Russians were playing. Henceforth, they could be under no illusion that any attempt to supplant the British at Kabul or to take over any substantial part of Afghanistan would mean an Anglo-Russian war.” By his final choice of emphasis for his study, Robson clearly indicates that, in his opinion, the Russian involvement in the region was the most important aspect of the Second Afghan War. He is the only historian analyzed who states a belief in this importance outright, although Ewans and Heathcote do include the idea of Russian aggression affecting British imperial policies. Although he details the events of the entire war, Robson places much more emphasis on diplomatic contacts between Afghanistan, Britain, and Russia.

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151 As the details of this skirmish are outside the area of study for this work, see T.A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars: 1839-1919* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1980), 166-210, for more information.
152 Heathcote, 165.
153 Robson, 280.
Unlike Robson, who only focused on the events of the Second Afghan War, thereby not providing a complete picture of the events faced by Britain in Afghanistan, Archibald Forbes’ work on the First and Second Afghan Wars allows readers to gain a more complete picture of conditions in the region. Of all the works studied, Forbes’ is the oldest, first published in 1892.  

Many of the major political and military figures who determined the fate of the British in Afghanistan were still alive when Forbes was writing, a consideration which clearly colored how critical of the war he felt he could be. Forbes quotes one of the major military figures in the Second Afghan War, Sir Frederick Roberts—whose portrait appears on the frontispiece to Forbes’ book—on the final resolution of Russian involvement in Central Asia, “Should Russia in future years attempt to conquer Afghanistan, or invade India through it, we should have a better chance of attaching the Afghans to our interest if we avoid all interference with them in the meantime.” Forbes’ printing of Robert’s remark reinforces the conclusion drawn by both Heathcote and Robson: that the most important aspect which arose out of the resolution of the conflict was the continued existence of a buffer zone between the two empires, a role which Afghanistan would continue to occupy through the end of the nineteenth century.

Afghanistan’s role as a buffer state was the most important development to come out of the Second Afghan War. Although the Afghani experience was important in formulating Liberal Imperialism, it was not the only country responsible for the British decision to rethink traditional imperialist policies. The Zulu War provided the first impetus for considering the ramifications of empire, but it was the experiences of the British in Afghanistan which caused the eventual shift in the way Britain viewed its empire. Afghanistan was the catalyst needed to spur the beginnings of change in policies, and the Zulu War was the first step towards a “new” concept of imperialism. Afghanistan was the more important military engagement for the formulation of policy, since Russia, another imperial power, was a consideration in any decisions made regarding the country.

An analysis of Afghanistan’s role in British history would be woefully incomplete without examining the impact that this small, formerly insignificant country had on the political careers of two of the most revered British statesmen of the nineteenth century, William Ewart Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli. Both men would find their moral beliefs stretched by the events perpetuated in Afghanistan, and one man will have his political career ended partially because of the ill-fated invasion of the country.

155 Forbes, 325.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE COURAGE OF GLADSTONE’S CONVICTIONS

William Ewart Gladstone’s moral beliefs were directly linked to the Liberal Party’s policies during the last decades of the nineteenth century. His moral beliefs are cited in most of his biographies and studies on the effectiveness of his terms as Prime Minister, but are rarely ever spelled in precise terms. Instead, Gladstone’s biographers and historians are content to merely refer to him as a “moral man.” But what is this morality? Gladstone is often described as a religious man, and most authors feel that the evidence of his religiosity is sufficient for claims of morality. However, one of his earlier biographers, Sir Edward W. Hamilton provides the best description of why Gladstone was considered moral by his contemporaries: “Great though his political courage was, he possessed a courage of a still higher quality—the courage of his convictions.” In the end, it was his convictions which led him to have the greatest impact on his fellow politicians, including his foremost opponent, Benjamin Disraeli.

In the struggle between the Conservative and Liberal Parties which occurred during the 1870s, Gladstone’s moral fiber was often compared to that of his rival, Disraeli. The press focused on the moral nature of Gladstone, even to the point of citing his moral character in their coverage of his foreign policy decisions. Evidence of Gladstone’s moral character can be found in the voluminous body of writing he generated during his lifetime, from the many volumes of his diaries, his correspondence, and the articles he wrote for The Nineteenth Century, a Liberal periodical which was begun during the time when the Liberal Party was not in office.

Gladstone’s moral beliefs were directly linked to his familial and religious background. Born into a fairly prosperous family with a strong spiritual background, Gladstone learned early in life about the tenets of his faith. His parents were both very religious, and this familial religiosity would shape his views and beliefs for decades to come. Gladstone, like his parents, was a member of the Church of England, and his Anglican beliefs helped to form his policies both as a Member of Parliament (MP), and later as the Prime Minister of Britain.

Acknowledging this aspect of his religious background, Gladstone is often portrayed as a man of strong faith. One example of the way he was portrayed as a moral man can be found in a Manchester Guardian article entitled, “Mr. Gladstone and ‘Fanaticism’.” This very short, direct article clearly shows how Gladstone’s morality and religious views influenced his feelings. The article quotes Gladstone on his feelings regarding the Russian interference in Bulgaria, “Nevertheless, the conduct in this matter of many persons of superior Christianity…will, to my dying day, be to me a subject of

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159 The Manchester Guardian is the full name of this newspaper. It is the name which is listed on the masthead of the paper, but inside every edition of the paper, the editors refer to it as The Guardian. For more information on the biases of the Manchester Guardian, see Chapter Two.
great grief and astonishment.”¹⁶⁰ Both *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, specifically reference Gladstone’s spirituality in their coverage of British foreign policy concerning Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Russia.¹⁶¹

Evidence of Gladstone’s spirituality can be found in his own writings as well as contemporary writings about him. Gladstone was an avid letter writer, orator and essayist. One example of both his spirituality and rhetoric was a notation in his diary on December 31, 1877, his birthday: “And now let me close together the birthday year & the natural year...for tho’ I have not been busied as I could have wished and schemed, the part assigned to me in the Eastern Question has been a part great and good far beyond my measure.”¹⁶² These creative outlets allowed him to comment on his true feelings regarding both Afghanistan and the Russian Empire. However, although Gladstone’s personal opinions helped to shape the Liberal policies, they were not always the final determining factor in creating Liberal foreign policy.

Following the defeat of his party in 1874, Gladstone resigned from the leadership of the Liberal Party, and subsequently from Parliament. In the five years he was not involved in Parliamentary politics, Gladstone did not remain quiet on the question of Russia’s expansion of its empire. He used the newly founded political periodical, *The Nineteenth Century*, which published its first articles in 1877, to express his opinions. To this end, Gladstone contributed several articles to the publication on the Eastern Question.¹⁶³

These five selected articles from *The Nineteenth Century* provide a closer look into Gladstone’s personal feelings on the Eastern Question. He examines actions Russia took in Turkey, blaming the country extensively for the problems in the region. As he wrote, “Here is the misfortune that the Power [Russia], whose hands seem to many the most soiled of all in Christendom, is also the Power under the greatest temptation to misuse its opportunities for corrupt and disorganizing purposes.”¹⁶⁴ Gladstone’s disappointment in Russia was twofold: he was disappointed in the country because of their imperialist tendencies, but he was more disappointed in Russia, because a Christian country, he felt, should not be invading other countries and forcing its beliefs on them.¹⁶⁵ He also outlined steps that Britain needed to take to help resolve the conflict. Gladstone felt that the British should be involved with the solution to the Eastern Question and that British views on liberty should be followed by the countries involved in the peace settlement.

Gladstone’s views on liberty are enumerated in his piece, “Liberty in the East and West,” published by *The Nineteenth Century* in June 1878. The article provided an overview of how formerly occupied countries attained liberty, in an attempt to convince...

¹⁶⁰ “Mr. Gladstone and ‘Fanaticism,’” *The Manchester Guardian* page 8 column 5 September 15, 1877.
¹⁶¹ These two papers provide an excellent source for comparisons of public opinion. For more information on why these two particular newspapers have been selected, see Chapter Two.
¹⁶³ Although Gladstone contributed many articles on this question, this paper will focus on only five of the articles, which date from February 1878 to January 1879. These articles were all written before Gladstone reentered politics and are written from his point of view, and not the Liberal Party’s. For more details on the Eastern Question, see Chapter Three.
¹⁶⁵ Travis Crosby, *The Two Mr. Gladstones* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 156.
Austria (which was also directly involved in the Eastern Question on the Russian side), to treat those “peoples of the East” fairly. Gladstone also enumerates what he believes a fair conclusion would be and a listing of what each involved country, including Britain, should gain from the final settlement.\textsuperscript{166} Writing at the end of his article about the unity that the English government and people must have, Gladstone commented: “But all events, the course of the English Government and people on the entire question of the Christian liberties is now clear, if they are united.”\textsuperscript{167} By the end of his article on liberty, Gladstone had begun to sound more like a politician involved in the government again as opposed to a passionate outside advisor.

As Gladstone began to show a renewed involvement in politics, his writings also began to take on a more political bent, but still reflected his moral tendencies. By 1879, Gladstone had begun to indicate that he would consider a return to politics. He began traveling around the country giving speeches against Disraeli’s Conservative government. These speeches referenced the imperial foreign policy advocated by Disraeli, and showed the less positive aspects of imperialism, including the Bulgarian atrocities.\textsuperscript{168} Gladstone’s article, “England’s Mission,” reveals his opinions on the British Empire and imperialism. The article builds on the themes Gladstone first introduced in “Liberty in the East and West.” The main purpose of the article is to express his views on what Britain’s imperial policies should be in the months and years to come. Believing that the concept of empire is one which is enmeshed in the fabric of British consciousness, Gladstone wrote:

\begin{quote}
The sentiment of empire may be called innate in every Briton…

It is part of our patrimony: born with our birth, dying only with one’s death; incorporating itself in the first elements of our knowledge, and interwoven with all of our habits of mental action upon public affairs.

It is a portion of our national stock, which has more than once run to rank excess, and brought us up to mischief accordingly, mischief that for a time we have weakly thought was ruin.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

Gladstone’s concept of empire was one which would come to dominate his opinions on foreign affairs for the rest of his term as Prime Minister. The idea that empire was an unavoidable situation; and that imperial expansion was the key to Britain remaining a viable world power, is a pervading theme in Gladstone’s works. This belief that empire is a necessary feature for Britain’s continued world-wide dominance will prove to be a

\textsuperscript{166} William Ewart Gladstone, “Liberty in the East and West,” \textit{The Nineteenth Century} vol. 4,19 (1878): 1170- 1171. Eventually, the Eastern Question was settled at the Congress of Berlin in June of 1878. Decisions resulting from this congress included Russia being able to keep the lands acquired in Turkish Asia, Britain would not become involved in areas outside of the British sphere, and the borders of Turkey and Bulgaria were fixed by this Congress. For more details see Sir A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch, eds., \textit{The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919}, Volume 3: 1866-1919 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1923), 132-142.

\textsuperscript{167} Gladstone, “Liberty in the East and West,” 1174.

\textsuperscript{168} Eugenio Biagini, \textit{Gladstone}, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 64-65. This is another name for the Eastern Question. As it occurred mainly in Bulgaria, the Eastern Question is referred to by both names in contemporary literature.

recurring theme of Gladstone’s thoughts on empire, both as a Member of Parliament, as the Prime Minister, or as a private citizen.

Although Gladstone was not currently a part of Parliament, he was never absent from public consciousness. In 1876, The Times published a letter he wrote to the President of the Labour Representation League on his feelings regarding Russia: “I repeat, that if Russia has selfish designs in the East, no policy can effectually promote these designs as a policy of coldness and indifference on our part towards the Christian populations which can have no other effect than that of throwing them into her arms.”

It is interesting to note that although Gladstone does not hesitate to criticize the Conservative government’s policies on Russian agitation in Turkey, the policy he is criticizing is not fully formed. Disraeli did not have a fully framed policy regarding Turkey at the time Gladstone’s letter appeared. Instead, he was not nearly as anti-Turk as Gladstone portrayed him, feeling that the event would help to “assert England’s position as a great power and how to exploit the potential differences within [Austria].” Disraeli’s opinions on the conflict are important in reaching an understanding of Gladstone’s attacks against both him and the Conservative Party.

The Times continued to ensure that Gladstone remained in the public eye during his years out of Parliament by printing selections from his correspondence regarding the major issues of the time. One of the major political questions that Gladstone commented on during this time of non-political involvement was the Eastern Question. By 1879, when Gladstone re-entered Parliament, as an MP for Midlothian, the Bulgarian Atrocities phase of the Eastern Question had been settled and the most pressing foreign policy question was the Second Afghan War. In his speeches for his election, Gladstone featured the issue of Afghanistan prominently, including his famous quote:

Remember the rights of the savage, as we call him. Remember that the happiness of his humble home, remember that the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own.

The above quotation is one of the most famous from Gladstone’s set of Midlothian speeches. It marks the first time he made a moral statement on the question of Afghanistan specifically, as opposed to general statements on the Russia’s imperialist tendencies. He continued his speech with an indictment of the situation in Afghanistan caused by the Conservative government’s paranoia over the possibility of Russian invasion. Gladstone spoke about the invasion in very harsh terms, calling it “the most wanton invasion of Afghanistan, [which broke] the country into pieces, made a miserable ruin, destroyed whatever there was in it of peace and order, caused it to be added to the

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170 “Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright” Times (London) November 27, 1876 pg, 6 col. 3. As Gladstone was giving this speech to the Labour Representation League, a precursor to today’s Labour Party, he included stronger anti-imperialist sentiment than he usually publicly expressed. For more information on the anti-imperialist leanings of the Labour Representation League, see Andrew Thorpe, A History of the British Labour Party Second Edition. (London: Palgrave, 2001), 1-4.
172 See Chapter 3 for an analysis of Gladstone’s feelings on the Eastern Question.
anarchies of the Eastern World.”\textsuperscript{174} He used this speech, covered in all the country’s newspapers, to draw attention to the issue of Afghanistan, which he felt very strongly about. Gladstone believed that the British decision to invade Afghanistan was motivated by the imperial policies of the Conservative government, and the invasion was an unwelcome extension of British territorial demands onto the country.

The question of Afghanistan was important to Gladstone, but it was not very important to his electorate, who narrowly elected him to his position as an MP. As Roland Quinault writes in his article on Gladstone’s foreign policy in Afghanistan, “The Afghan issue did not contribute significantly to Gladstone’s election victory at Midlothian, for his narrow majority—two hundred votes—had been predicted before he had begun his campaign.”\textsuperscript{175} Quinault continues his discussion on the election by citing the fact that although the issue of Afghanistan specifically was not significant, it played an important role in Gladstone’s overall indictment of Disraeli’s Conservative government.

Press coverage of Gladstone’s seminal speeches at Midlothian was comprehensive in both \textit{The Times} and \textit{The Manchester Guardian}. Each paper printed the speech, with \textit{The Times} devoting over a page to printing the speech in its entirety.\textsuperscript{176} Although \textit{The Times} allowed their readers to read the entire text of the speech, \textit{The Manchester Guardian} provided a better analysis of the speech and the issues it raised. As one of the articles in the days following the speech shows, Gladstone’s words had far-reaching results. His speech, which was referenced in the beginning of the “Summary of the News, Domestic” section of the paper, is called a “sweeping recapitulation of his charges against the Government in regard to foreign affairs.”\textsuperscript{177} The \textit{Guardian}’s editorial staff continued their coverage by commenting specifically on the section of the speech that introduced Gladstone’s feelings on empire. Gladstone’s thoughts received top billing in both the “Summary of the News” column and the “From Our London Correspondent” sections of the paper for the three days following his speech at Midlothian. Remaining in the news until the very beginning of December, the speech finally lost precedence when other events in the political realm were deemed more important by the editorial staff of the newspapers.\textsuperscript{178} The fact that this speech remained in the news for as long as it did was remarkable, as the newspapers of the time did not like to spend extensive time on one political speech.

After winning re-election to Parliament, Gladstone regained the leadership of the Liberal Party and soon acceded to the Prime Ministership of Britain.\textsuperscript{179} One of his first


\textsuperscript{175} Roland Quinault, “Afghanistan and Gladstone’s Moral Foreign Policy” \textit{History Today} vol. 52 (2002): 33.

\textsuperscript{176} “Mr. Gladstone in Midlothian” \textit{The Times (London)} page 10, page 11 column 1 November 26, 1879.

\textsuperscript{177} “Summary of News, Domestic” \textit{The Manchester Guardian} page 4 column 4 November 27, 1879.


\textsuperscript{179} The new Liberal government was approved by the Queen on April 24, 1880. Gladstone retained the title of Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury in addition to becoming the Prime Minister. Philip Guedalla, ed., \textit{The Queen and Mr. Gladstone} (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1934), 457.
issues as Prime Minister in the realm of foreign policy was the situation in Afghanistan. As Ronald Quinault described it, Gladstone’s view was to remove the British troops from Afghanistan as quickly as possible, seeing a continued British presence as both a moral and economic problem. Gladstone remained Chancellor of the Exchequer once he became Prime Minister. In this position, he controlled the money allotted to Afghanistan, which by 1880 had become quite extensive. In 1884, Gladstone received an estimate of the amount the war cost through March of 1879: “On 11 Dec. 1878 [the then-Chancellor of the Exchequer]…calculated the expenditure (up to 31 March 1879) at 1,200.00 pounds.” Although wanting to end British involvement on moral grounds, Gladstone also felt that the empire would be better served by an end to the economic expenditure in the country.

A letter Gladstone wrote to Lord Hartington, his Secretary of State for India, on June 9, 1880, shows his concern about the cost of the British invasion. He includes a five point list regarding Afghanistan and the cost of troops in the country. Gladstone specifically mentions his concerns over the monetary aspect of the war. The first and second points, taken together, explain Gladstone’s financial policies concerning Afghanistan:

1. If we were now in a condition to determine finally what courses England ought to take with respect to the cost of the [Second] Afghan War, there would be an immense advantage in getting rid of the question at the present time.
2. If at any given date during the [Parliamentary] Session we could be sure of being in such a condition, it would have been worth while to postpone our financial operations accordingly.

This is only one instance where Gladstone’s economic leanings are apparent. Several of his diary entries and letters to various officials in his government show his concerns. However, Gladstone was more concerned about the moral ramifications of the British involvement in Afghanistan. His private letters to Lord Granville, his Foreign Secretary, specifically mention his feelings toward Afghanistan upon his return to the office of Prime Minister: “And our moral position with respect to it is altered for the worse since we for our part began to cut and carve Afghanistan.” This letter more likely reflects Gladstone’s true feelings, since it, unlike several of the letters printed in the press, was not intended for public consumption. Unlike letters printed by the press, which carefully concealed Gladstone’s motives in determining policy behind his “liberal do-

180 Matthews, Diaries, vol. 9, 537.
181 January 3, 1884 memo of outstanding questions Gladstone desired answers to, with penciled in answers to the questions, from the British Library Additional Manuscript 44768.
183 Matthews, Diaries, vol. 9, Letter from Gladstone to Lord Spencer, lord president, 589; Listing of Change in Probate and Legacy Duty in Diary entry from November 26, 1880, 623. Many other examples of his economic leanings are apparent throughout volumes 9-11 of Gladstone’s diaries.
goodism,” the letter to Granville is very direct, including actual policy statements. Most letters sent to the press did not include actual policy statements, and were, at best, vague on topics in still contested areas of the world, like Afghanistan.

Press coverage of Gladstone’s actions in an imperial context cited policies regarding Afghanistan as examples of his moral values. Both *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* focused on the moral aspect of Britain’s involvement in Afghanistan when writing about the government’s imperial policies. *The Guardian* included an article in their March 15, 1880 edition that reveals a great deal about Gladstone’s liberal policies. Interestingly, it is not an article about the Liberal Party; instead the paper published “The Policy of the Opposition,” which provides an analysis of the Liberal government from the perspective of the former Conservative government. The article does not mention Gladstone’s imperial policies specifically, but it does cite the government being forced into “positions of extreme danger and discredit before a chance of entering an effective protest presented itself.” By running this article during the campaign season, *The Guardian* attempted to influence the election towards the Liberal Party.

Another article appeared shortly after “The Policy of the Opposition” ran. It too praises Gladstone and his moral government and includes a specific mention to the war in Afghanistan being caused by Disraeli’s imperialist tendencies. The writer calls his war policies: “a wanton attack upon weak and semi-barbarous neighbours…or of a purposeless and panic-stricken invasion of one which he had a temporary difficulty such as led to the worse than fruitless war in Afghanistan.” In this article, the author aimed to contrast the two leaders, and their parties’ decisions regarding military actions in Afghanistan. The author supported Gladstone’s policies in the region, and took the opportunity to vilify the Conservative government for what was perceived as an immoral invasion into the country.

Although Gladstone was now the Prime Minister in England, he still did not receive a great deal of favorable press coverage in his country’s media. Gladstone was never popular with the editors of *The Times* who tried their hardest to discount his choices of policy. In 1881, *The Times* published a lengthy letter to the editor, written by E. Ashmead-Bartlett that comments on “Mr. Gladstone’s Imperial Policy.” This letter strongly criticizes Liberal policies on imperialism, and makes specific mention of the current situation in Afghanistan. Ashmead-Bartlett criticizes Gladstone, speaking about

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185 Michael Edwardes, *Playing the Great Game* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), 104. Edwardes’ assessment of the British government’s decision to trust a native ruler referenced the idea of liberal do-goodism: “But the motive was concealed behind a façade of liberal do-goodism of the kind expressed by Gladstone as concern for ‘the sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan.”

186 Studies of the issues that newspapers chose to focus on regarding foreign policy cite Gladstone as a moral man, and how his eloquence in explaining difficult situations help to make them more understandable for the public. For more information see Raymond Postgate and Alymer Vallance, *England Goes to Press: The English People’s Opinion on Foreign Affairs as Reflected in Their Newspapers Since Waterloo (1815-1937)* (New York: The Bobb-Merrill Company, 1937), 183.


188 The Manchester Guardian, as a traditionally more liberal leaning paper, continually supported Liberal candidates over their Conservative opposition.


190 Koss, 216.
the loss of “great commercial and strategical position” to the empire, however, he does not make mention of any moral virtues of the new liberal policies. Ashmead-Bartlett then continues his criticism by analyzing the advantages Russia gained from the British evacuation of the country. His decision to be openly critical of the sitting Prime Minister in a time of war marked a departure from the typical editorials published by The Times, most of which did not openly condemn the policies of Gladstone’s government during war.

British involvement in the Second Afghan War ended in early 1881. Queen Victoria and Gladstone exchanged several heated memos and letters, regarding the situation in Afghanistan, and the decision to withdraw completely from the country, including the city of Kandahar, in the second week of January. Victoria wanted to retain the option of a continued British presence in the country, and Gladstone wanted a complete withdrawal from the country in keeping with both his moral opinions and the economic toll he saw the war taking on Britain. The Queen eventually succeeded in having the language of the treaty ending the Second Afghan War with Afghanistan include a clause about a possible presence remaining. The exchange grew quite heated with the memo from the Queen to Gladstone of January 5, 1881, including several italicized sentences to give particular emphasis to her anger.

Gladstone finally acquiesced to the Queen’s request to permit language to allow British troops to remain in Kandahar. In a show of language which was not similar to that which he wrote in his private correspondence, he consented to Victoria’s demand of a continued British presence in Afghanistan. His humble acquiescence shows the type of relations that existed between the Queen and her Prime Minister. “Mr. Gladstone [he refers to himself in the third person] humbly adds the expression of his regret that Your Majesty should have been subjected to any degree of trouble or annoyance of in this manner [the question of Kandahar].” Gladstone did not want to agree with the Queen. He felt strongly that evacuation was the only moral answer to the question of Afghanistan, and did not want to discuss any other options, including the possibility of troops being left in the country permanently. Nevertheless, he realized that in order to expedite the process of British troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, he needed to at least appear conciliatory to the Queen on the issue of Kandahar.

Public opinion and the opinion of the elite were mixed in the aftermath of the Second Afghan War. As the editorial by Ashmead-Bartlett shows, support was not unanimous for the decision to withdraw from the country. However, the originator of the policies also commented on the situation in Afghanistan. In a letter written to his son soon after the death of his longtime political rival, Disraeli, Gladstone comments on both the achievements of his imperial policies and of his administration: “It cannot be too soon

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192 Koss, 238.

193 Guedalla, ed., 495-498. The letter is as follows: “The Queen in approving the Speech generally, commands the Ministers in Attendance to convey to the Cabinet her disapproval of that part of the Speech referring to Kandahar; & the Queen only gives her assent to the Speech under the express understanding that the Cabinet will give her an assurance that, should circumstances arise rendering the retention of Kandahar desirable, the Government will not hesitate to continue to hold that position.” (495).

194 Mr. Gladstone to Queen Victoria in Ibid., 496.
for my inclinations but it must be fixed by my duties and we begin to see the questions which stood for discussion when we came in one by one disappearing. The evacuation of Afghanistan is nearly complete."

Gladstone was proud of his accomplishments in Afghanistan. He never wanted Britain to invade the country and chose British evacuation from the country as one of his priorities upon once again becoming Prime Minister. He accomplished this goal in just over a year, and as a result, the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia returned to the state of an armed truce between Britain and Russia, which was by and large the normal state of affairs for the region.

Gladstone’s moral agenda did not fade from public consciousness at the end of the Second Afghan War. When he reached a political milestone at the end of 1882, the press seized the opportunity to discuss many aspects of Gladstone’s policies, including his morality. The press, who had both praised and reviled Gladstone for years on his foreign policies, took this occasion to fete the celebrated man who redesigned his entire party. In April of 1881, Gladstone’s longtime rival, Benjamin Disraeli, had died, leaving no one else to fill the role as a counterpart to Gladstone. In their coverage of Disraeli’s death, the press had the opportunity to pass their final judgment regarding his imperial aims. Gladstone’s political jubilee provided the press with an opportunity to do the same for him, including assessing his treatment of Afghanistan.

On December 13, 1882, Gladstone reached his political jubilee. It was fifty years to the day since he first entered the political arena as an MP. The event was celebrated by many different press outlets: The Times, The Manchester Guardian, the foreign press, and Gladstone’s political peers, including his friend and Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, and the Queen herself. All the articles mention Gladstone’s impeccable moral virtues, the successes of his imperial policies, and other developments during his political lifetime too numerous to mention.

By 1882, the beginnings of the policies which would later become the ideology of Liberal Imperialism had begun being implemented by the Liberal Party. In the aftermath of their loss in the Second Afghan War, the Liberal Party and Gladstone were forced to reexamine their policy decisions. Central Asia provided a new playing field for the implementation of these new policies, including the most important ramification of the new policies, the devolution of power to local governments, as epitomized by the British appointment of Abdur Rahman to the throne of Afghanistan.

Abdur Rahman had been in charge for over a year by the time of Gladstone’s political jubilee. Although he was not specifically mentioned in the coverage of this momentous occasion, press coverage did make mention of new developments in foreign policy by the Liberal Party. These new developments included, by default, the granting of limited autonomy to a local ruler, as seen in the case of Afghanistan. None of the

196 Gladstone was the only political figure to reach this milestone during the nineteenth century. He noted in his diary the many salutations and letters he received in indication of the great achievement. Matthews, Diaries Vol. 10, 380-381.
197 Abdur Rahman became the leader of Afghanistan in an agreement which established his local autonomy and allowed Britain to still control Afghani foreign relations. The relationship between Gladstone and Abdur Rahman, including the ramifications of Abdur Rahman’s appointment will be covered in depth in Chapter Six.
coverage dating from the time of Gladstone’s jubilee was critical of either the man or his moral motives in the foreign policy arena.

Instead, both The Times and The Manchester Guardian published full page retrospectives of his career, and detailed other media outlets choices in their reporting on the grand occasion.\textsuperscript{198} The Guardian, in addition to publishing its own roundup of the festivities and commendations to Gladstone on the jubilee, also included two other English papers’ praise of Gladstone. By including The Standard and The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian provides a more comprehensive accounting of the praise and commentary which accompanied the jubilee. The Standard refers to Gladstone’s reign in politics as “one of the happiest and most prosperous periods of English history, and…when time has done its part…will be remembered by posterity with…gratitude.”\textsuperscript{199}

Similarly to The Standard, The Daily Telegraph touches on the notion that although Gladstone was not always the most popular among his fellow politicians, especially those in the Conservative Party, no one begrudged him his political accomplishments. As The Daily Telegraph editorialized, “The greatest half century of all our English annals is epitomized in the person and experience of him [Gladstone]…There is really no political career among us which can be compared in scope and extent with Mr. Gladstone.”\textsuperscript{200}

Praise for Gladstone was not limited to British newspapers. To show this, The Times published a translated excerpt from a French newspaper, Le Temps, which refers to the longevity of Gladstone’s career versus the short-term careers of his political counterparts in France: “And how justified we are in looking on this example [Gladstone] with an envious eye—we whose political development has every 20 years a revolution or coup de force breaking one of the links of its chain.”\textsuperscript{201} France had, during the period of Gladstone’s political involvement, undergone several regime changes, which made Le Temps’ choice to profile Gladstone as a longtime force in British politics, more noticeable. The article appeared during the time of imperial rivalry between the two countries, and is remarkable as press coverage of one country’s government in the other country was normally characterized by heated invective.\textsuperscript{202}

Gladstone’s jubilee provided the opportunity for both praise and recollection of previous events, occurring during his fifty years in politics. Equal attention was given to the momentous events of both national and international scope in which Gladstone had a major influence, including the granting of suffrage to a larger segment of the British population, wars resulting in German and Italian reunification, and of course both the First and Second Afghan Wars. Within this material praising his career, a trend emerges, through the elements invoked, the outlines of what would come to be known as Liberal imperialism.

In the years following Gladstone’s political jubilee, and the installation of Abdur Rahman as ruler of Afghanistan, the situation in Central Asia remained mostly quiet. Of the articles that even referenced Afghanistan, most were letters to the editor or summaries

\textsuperscript{198} “Mr. Gladstone’s Political Jubilee-A Retrospect,” The Times (London) page 3 columns 4-6, page 4 columns 1-3 December 13, 1882.

\textsuperscript{199} “Mr. Gladstone’s Jubilee,” Manchester Guardian page 7 column 1-2 December 13, 1882 The extensive ellipses in this quote are used to shorten a laudatory comment which instead of being a sentence long has stretched into two paragraphs, in the typical nineteenth century fashion.

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{202} Koss, 381.
of news in which a brief mention of the country sufficed. In 1883, *The Times* only published two articles regarding Gladstone and Russia in relation to the question of empire.

These articles both concerned the fall 1883 meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark between Gladstone and the Tsar of Russia, Alexander III. This meeting of these two leaders is remarkable when it is taken into account that only two years earlier, the British government was considering going to war with Russia over the question of Afghanistan. Interestingly, Gladstone made more of a mention of the meeting in his personal diaries than his own country’s press. To Gladstone, the meeting in Denmark provided his first opportunity to meet the Tsar of Russia and to gain a personal knowledge of the man whose government was so feared by the British government.

The meeting of these two men, the Prime Minister of Britain and the Russian Tsar, was covered sparingly in Britain, but it received comprehensive coverage in the Russia. In Britain, *The Times* broke its coverage of this historic meeting into two sections. One section was filed from Saint Petersburg and consists of a summation of the Russian press’ view on the meeting. The other was filed by a *Times* writer who took the time to analyze the event. On the occasion of this meeting, the author wrote: “They [the Russian Press] say that there is absolutely no danger to be perceived if England and Russia seek an understanding upon political questions which concern both States in common.”

The question of Afghanistan continued to be one of the political questions which necessitated a greater understanding between the two countries.

Although *The Times* ’ report on the meeting between Gladstone and Alexander III was comprehensive, it lacked any description of the setting or behavior at the meeting. However, Gladstone included his favorable thoughts on the meeting in his diary. At the time of the meeting in Copenhagen, several European leaders were also visiting the Danish city. Gladstone describes a dinner party where they all met: “As a domestic scene it was of wonderful interest; there was no etiquette: the sovereign personages vied with one another in their simple & kindly manners so that a distinction hardly could be drawn.” In his diary, Gladstone seems to be overwhelmed by the lack of pretension in the company he kept. He wrote of the most important policy makers in the world as one would describe friends, or acquaintances who happened to be attending a dinner party, not as world leaders who would have an impact on his country’s policy decisions. The close, personal contact between the decision makers and leaders of Britain and Russia would become much more of an asset to both countries when the still unsettled question of Afghanistan arose again in 1885, with Russian encroachment into the country.

By late spring, 1885, the situation in Afghanistan was once again heating up. The Russian empire was slowly making inroads into Afghanistan, an area that the British

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203 Several memos from the Gladstone government concerning possible military encounters with Russia over Afghanistan can be seen in the British Library Additional Manuscripts 43567, 43568, and 43569. These memos date from late October 1881 to the end of August 1882. As the year progressed, discussions moved away from the idea of a treaty to the idea of issuing an ultimatum; a threat from which the Gladstone government eventually backed down.

204 It is important to note that although the British press discussed the coverage in Russia, no analysis of Russian press coverage was possible, and the editorial decisions of British newspapers must not be overlooked in a discussion of these sources.

205 “Mr. Gladstone and the Czar,” *The Times (London)* page 5 column 2 September 19, 1883.

Empire treated as a buffer state. The Liberal Government, under Gladstone, decided to confer the status of buffer state on Afghanistan, seeing the country as an area where neither Britain nor Russia could exercise its imperialist tendencies. However, Russia violated the idea of a neutral, buffer state when it expanded into Pandjeh, a town on the border of Afghanistan. The situation in Pandjeh diffused quite quickly with the help of Abdur Rahman who stepped into the debate between the two countries and helped to avert open warfare. By May 2, 1885, Gladstone was able to record the following in his diary concerning the state of affairs in Russia:

What was a ray of light yesterday is a flood today, and the great Russian question is, according to all human probability amicably settled; as far as the present stage, and the point of threatening difficulty [Pandjeh], are concerned.

Gladstone’s relief in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan was to be short lived. His decision to use Afghanistan as a buffer state was not popular with all members of the British public. A letter to the editor, written by a man identified only as T.J.M. gives a comparison of the policies of Disraeli and Gladstone. This individual advocates a policy of lessening military involvement in Afghanistan, which he feels detracts from what the main goal of British policy should be: ending the Russian imperial spread. The author feels that the goal could only be accomplished by reverting back to Britain’s:

Old traditional policy of having Turkey as our ally and let us give her and Persia half the help we are now giving to Afghanistan for very dubious results, and we shall purchase a security and immunity from Russian menace greater than would result from a successful war in Afghanistan.

Public opinion began to turn away from the Liberal policies regarding both Afghanistan and imperialism in general. Less than a month after The Times published the letter from T.J.M, Gladstone resigned from the Queen’s government. His resignation was caused by problems with the passage of the budget, but these budgetary problems were indirectly related to the economic cost of his foreign policies.

As a result of Gladstone’s resignation, the press was once again afforded an opportunity, similar to that of 1882, to examine the successes and failures of the Liberal Party under his leadership. Not only was Gladstone analyzed by his own country’s press, but the foreign press also used the news of his resignation to pass judgment on both Gladstone himself and the Liberal Party who espoused his policies. The Russian press,

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207 Britain and Russia had agreed by late 1884 that Afghanistan needed to remain as a neutral territory and a demarcation commission was established by the two countries to try and determine Afghanistan’s boundaries. Ewans, 76.

208 Diaries vol. 11, 333

209 “Our Afghan Policy” Times (London) page 10 column 5 May 29, 1885. Details on British Foreign Policy goals regarding Turkey and Persia can be found in Ward and Gooch, eds., 78-81.

following a pattern established by their coverage of Gladstone’s jubilee, covered the resignation extensively.

Russian press coverage specifically referenced the situation in Afghanistan, and the impact of Gladstone’s resignation and the resulting return to power of the Conservative party on an already complicated international situation. *The Times* provided a comprehensive summation of translations of pertinent sections of Russian columns, including both non-official and semi-official papers.211 The quotations from these papers add to the overall international perspective on the resignation.

*The Manchester Guardian* ran two articles entitled, the “Political Crisis” and the “Continental Press on the Situation,” referring to Gladstone’s resignation. These articles overviewed how some foreign countries’ presses, including those in Austria, Germany, and France, reacted to the end of the second Gladstone government. Interestingly, the papers of these countries, which normally admit to being against the Liberal government, wrote that they would prefer the sitting government to remain in power, because these foreign governments believed that the new Conservative government would “inevitably further increase the isolation of England and lead to more serious diplomatic differences with other Powers, particularly if the Conservatives carry out the policy of bombast which they have hitherto made so prominent a feature in their programme.”212

The English press helped to create the picture of Gladstone as an upstanding leader by selecting articles from the foreign press which portrayed him in this manner. The editors of *The Manchester Guardian* specifically chose articles where Gladstone is portrayed as a moral, upright individual, and his political rival, Disraeli, is vilified. In newspapers from Rome reprinted by *The Times*, Gladstone is referred to as a moral man, with his morality bringing about his downfall, as opposed to Disraeli, who, although given credit for what he accomplished, is not treated with the same level of regard. The Italian press cites Gladstone’s innovations in international relations and the successes of his administration as reasons why Gladstone should receive the epithet of “Grand Old Man,” as he was called in Italy. His faults, which they do not list, are a result of the “lofty ideality of his character, has been that of believing that he could adapt to international relations the same principles of Liberalism and humanitarianism which he took for the guides of his conduct in governing the English people.”213 Although the continental press was favorable to Gladstone, he did not portray himself in as favorable a light. As he wrote in his own diary, on his resignation from office and his disappointment with leaving some loose ends at the end of his second cabinet:

I left office happy in many respects as to the condition of affairs; but I should have been happier if the correspondence on the Afghan frontier had then reached the conclusion which shortly before there seemed to be reason & title to expect.

My countrymen are just now overlooking in me many defects, as they are commonly given to compassion for the fall. Prominent among them is the

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211 “The Afghan Frontier Question,” *The Times (London)* page 5 columns 1-2 June 16, 1885. The problems of using Russian sources are outlined previously in this chapter, n. 43.


213 “Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield,” *The Times (London)* page 7 column 4 June 20, 1885.
daily growing defect of age which is asserting itself from day to day in ways better known to me than to my over-partial judges.  

Gladstone is overly hard on himself in his own, private diary, but the truth remains, because of his resignation and the Conservative government’s return to power, British imperial policies changed. The policies reverted back to the much more pro-war stance espoused by the Disraeli government, Still the Conservatives could not ignore the Liberal ideas that had prevailed in the previous five years, including the tradition of local autonomy, a permanent factor in British foreign policy following the installation of Abdur Rahman.

William Ewart Gladstone had a tremendous affect on British politics, as the articles, letters, and quotations have shown. His moral views, established at an early age, and developed more fully during the over fifty years he was in power, guided him through his varying changes in policy. However, Gladstone’s moral polices were not the only factor which influenced his political decisions.

The policies of the British government in the time of Gladstone and Disraeli were shaped by the personal discourse between the two men. The moral compass that both men relied on directly influenced their parties’ opinions on imperialism and other foreign affairs. Although the two men had their differences, both had an extraordinary impact on Britain. Years after their deaths, they are still studied, both separately and individually. As a comparative study of Disraeli and Gladstone, written in 1926 showed, the perceptions of the two men were as follows:

Disraeli worked for a proud and powerful Empire; and who in these days in likely to complain of his work and his ideal? Gladstone responded more immediately to the claims of humanity, and saw the greatness of his country, not in the extent of its possessions, but in the use it made of its opportunities to champion the weak; again who will complain?  

This piece, written after World War I, showed the impact of the two men. The British still had an empire at the beginning of the First World War partially a result of the British governmental switch to Liberal Imperialism after the Second Afghan War. Without the moral idealism of Gladstone, this change would not have been possible in the aftermath of a losing war. As Gladstone’s policies always received excessive coverage in the Empire’s press, it is necessary to examine the tone and level of this press coverage before accepting that it was solely his morality which led to the British foreign policies adopted in the last twenty five years of the nineteenth century. Gladstone’s morals may have

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214 Diaries vol. 11, 367.


impacted his policies, but it must also be said that his policies, especially those in the foreign arena, had just as large an impact on his moral values, as the end result of the Second Afghan War explains.
By the 1870s, British foreign policy politics had primarily become a contest between two major personalities: Benjamin Disraeli and William Ewart Gladstone. Disraeli, later Lord Beaconsfield, led the Conservative Party and Gladstone led the Liberal Party. The antagonistic dynamic between these two charismatic leaders characterized Britain’s foreign politics through 1881. Gladstone’s sincere reaction to the death of his rival in 1881, was remarkable considering the vehemence in each politician’s statements regarding their counterpart’s imperial agendas. Gladstone argued against Disraeli’s foreign policy agenda and failures in Conservative foreign policy in Afghanistan and South Africa became the focal point of his 1880 campaign against the Conservative leader.

Whereas more traditional political ideals influenced Gladstone’s beliefs regarding British foreign policy in Afghanistan, Disraeli’s professional and personal experiences colored his moral perceptions of the country. Disraeli’s unique experience as a Jew in Parliamentary politics contrasted with the views held by his political rival. Gladstone was perceived by his contemporaries as the man who always followed his own convictions. Disraeli, on the other hand, was seen as an incongruous figure in British politics, and this perception allowed his contemporaries to apply their own definitions of his morality to him. A quotation from a speech given by Disraeli as a young politician explained his beliefs regarding the importance of a politician’s convictions. “A statesman is essentially a practical character; and when he is called upon to take office, he is not to inquire what his options might or might not have been upon this or that subject; he is only to ascertain the needful and beneficial, and the most feasible measures are to be carried out…I laugh, therefore, at the objection against a man, that at a former period of his career he advocated a policy different to his present one.”

This is the only area where Disraeli differed in his opinions from those of his fellow politicians. Another characteristic which set him apart from the rest of his party and other members of Parliament was his religion. In addition to the prejudice he faced as a Jew, Disraeli also encountered additional derision because of his previous profession, as a novelist. These two sides of Disraeli’s personality—or more accurately, persona— Influenced the formation of his moral beliefs. One of his main biographers, Robert Blake, included the following assessment of Disraeli’s philosophy, and how his personal beliefs were related to the goals of the Conservative Party:

He [Disraeli] was a practical politician—in spite of his own definition of that figure as one who practices the errors of his predecessors. The truth is that Disraeli had principles when he led the party, and believed in them sincerely…He believed passionately in the greatness of England…But he also believed no less deeply that England’s greatness depended upon the ascendancy of the landed class…He proclaimed the doctrine of one nation

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and asserted that if the Conservative party was not a national party it was nothing.\textsuperscript{218}

As his beliefs were directly linked with his feelings regarding his political party, Blake’s assessment, combined with other examples of Disraeli’s principles including the quote from a speech given early in his career, help to explain the complicated relationship between the party leader and his party. These moral beliefs, combined with traditional Conservative ideals, including the need to continue to expand the British Empire to all ends of the earth, translated into the expansionist policies followed by the British in Afghanistan.

Another factor in British foreign policy decisions regarding Afghanistan was the political dynamic dominating British politics in the 1870s. By the time Benjamin Disraeli regained the office of Prime Minister in 1874, party politics had evolved into a highly-refined system. Newspaper articles from the time period specifically reference differences between the two main political parties, referring to them either as “the Cabinet,” if the party was in power, or “the opposition,” if the party was not currently in power.\textsuperscript{219} The division between the two parties was well defined, as each party had its own captivating figurehead, in the guise of Disraeli or Gladstone. Disraeli, although different personally from the general perception of his party, still embraced the ideas of a strong British Empire and a strong, cohesive government. Gladstone was the personification of his party. He believed in the Liberal Party goals of reducing the amount of both military and fiscal expenditures, as well as the need to create an empire which was designed to help the people the British conquered. These two men had very different beliefs regarding imperialist goals, and their different opinions characterized their inter-personal relationship, spending the last decade of Disraeli’s life trading insults on both a personal level, and a party level.

Disraeli’s personal background as a Jew, a novelist and an iconoclast added extra dimensions to the invectives hurled against him by his political opponents. Referred to as an “incongruous figure in Victorian England,” the elite saw Disraeli as an outsider, because he lacked the qualities which personified a Victorian gentleman.\textsuperscript{220} His appearance in Parliament was another area where Disraeli received criticism. As George Henry Francis wrote regarding his appearance:

> The face is often abandoned to an expression, or rather a no-expression, that almost amounts to fatuity. The countenance seems to ‘hang’...the forehead hangs (although the eye-brows are raised): the eyes hang, the mouth hangs, the chin hangs. The head hangs downward on the chest, the shoulders hang, and the whole body stoops.\textsuperscript{221}


\textsuperscript{219} This chapter references three newspapers, \textit{The Times}, \textit{The Manchester Guardian}, and \textit{The Times of India}. \textit{The Times of India} is used to gain an imperial perspective on party politics, as the editors did not have as direct an influence on the Home Government in London.

\textsuperscript{220} Blake, \textit{Disraeli}, 504.

As the quote from Francis shows, Disraeli was not a very respected figure by some in the Conservative Party. Between his Semitic looks, hangdog appearance, and at times sarcastic voice, he did not seem the ideal man to lead his party. This idea was reinforced by personal attacks on Disraeli. Criticisms of his appearance often referenced his ethnicity, with the struggle between Gladstone and Disraeli producing some of the most vitriolic attacks. Disraeli charged Gladstone with defaming him, including a statement which indicated that ‘Gladstone had claimed that ‘the great name of England’ was ‘degraded and debased’ by the Prime Minister [Disraeli].”

The two men would continue to trade barbs for their entire political career.

Disraeli, although remembered as a politician, could not escape his previous career, as a writer. His career began when he was in his early twenties and looking for a professional vocation. Disraeli began this profession after publishing several articles in literary magazines. As Thom Braun cites on the first page of Disraeli the Novelist, Disraeli’s two careers, as a novelist and a politician, were linked: “As the Saturday Review of 9 April 1870 has said, ‘Mr. Disraeli has provided a new sensation for a jaded public. The English mind was startled when a retired novelist became Prime Minister. It has been not less surprised at the announcement that a retired Prime Minister is about again to become a novelist.’” This review, which appeared in the time between Disraeli’s first and second terms as Prime Minister, was a reaction to the publication of Lothair. Lothair marked Disraeli’s return to his former profession. Disraeli would continue to write for the last decade of his life. As a writer, he was best known for his Young England trilogy. This trilogy comprised of three novels, Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred, written between 1844 and 1847. The novels are concerned with many complex themes, but the most important theme in determining Disraeli’s moral background is the issue of religion, which he addressed in Tancred. As Robert Blake noted, this novel, written at a time when Disraeli was beginning to enter politics, clearly indicates Disraeli’s opinion on religion:

Among the novels of his [Disraeli’s] maturity it is the one which treats Jerusalem and Jewry most seriously and adnumerates most clearly Disraeli’s highly eccentric and idiosyncratic views on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity—views which to most Englishmen were either repugnant or incomprehensible.

Tancred has long been acknowledged as an important book in an examination of Disraeli’s beliefs on religion. Yet, the literary achievements of the novel are weak at best. Sarah Bradford described Tancred as, “this curious, mystical and, finally, profoundly unsatisfactory book,” further re-enforcing the idea of a lack of literary merit.

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224 Lothair was a great financial success. The novel was a source of great interest since it was written by a former Prime Minister. In addition, the success of Lothair encouraged Disraeli to write another novel, Endymion. Ibid., 7.
226 Bradford, 180.
Although *Tancred* may not be a literary masterpiece, its importance lies in understanding Disraeli’s goals regarding Judaism and England in general. His goals were, in his own words:

First, England’s civilization, with its worship of progress, ‘its false excitement, its bustling invention, and its endless toil’ was tired and superficial; its policies meaningless and futile; second, to save itself to find inspiration, imagination and faith, it had to look Asia-ward, to the Near East, to the sources of its religion and values.”

Several scholars view *Tancred* as a turning point in Disraeli’s career. He entered a higher level of politics soon after its publication and ceased to write his novels. The publication also marked the end of Disraeli using his Jewish background to create a personal myth to counter the traditional perceptions of the Conservative Party. Disraeli managed to gain his party’s leadership in the years after *Tancred* was published. He embraced his Jewish heritage in his defense of the removal of the Jewish disabilities and these strong convictions led to his being appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852 by the Derby government. As party leader, Disraeli still faced a great deal of criticism for his ethnic background. However, he was able to overcome this criticism and gain his party’s esteem by the end of his career.

Disraeli struggled to overcome his ethnic background for the rest of his life. Although his father, Isaac, and grandfather, Benjamin, were both content to use the original spelling of their last name, D’Israeli, Benjamin (the younger) felt the need to Anglicize it. After Benjamin (the elder) died, when Benjamin (the younger) was thirteen, the D’Israelis converted to Christianity. Disraeli would remain unsure about both his religion and his religious identity for the next three decades of his life. It would not be until his rise to the Conservative Party leadership that he would begin to dull his use of Jewish rhetoric to set himself apart from other aspiring politicians.

Disraeli first began to “invent” his Jewish identity after a trip to Palestine in 1830-1831. It was during this trip that he first experienced the idea of Jews being successful in any field they wished, an idea he would take to heart. Unfortunately, Disraeli was accused of exaggerating these claims in an attempt to make himself and his ethnic background appear more prosperous. His exaggerations of Jewish greatness included the idea that Jews were superior to all other “races.” As Disraeli saw his Jewish identity as a

228 Endelman in Richmond and Smith, 127.
229 The term “Jewish Disabilities” refers to the words “true faith of a Christian” included in a required oath to become a Member of Parliament (MP). Since these words remained in the oath, no Jews were able to become MPs. See Joseph Hendershot Park, *British Prime Ministers of the Nineteenth Century: Policies and Speeches*. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 195, 212.
230 As a thirteen year old, Benjamin was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah, which marked the time that a young boy became a man in the Jewish tradition. It was his rapidly approaching landmark which hurried the family’s conversion. For more information on Disraeli’s Bar Mitzvah, see Weintraub, 31.
231 Endelman, 106.
mark of racial superiority, he emphasized this idea in speeches he gave in Parliament. In his views on Judaism, Disraeli believed that religion was secondary to “race.” Disraeli began publishing his Young England novels and his interest in politics began to grow as a result of both this journey to his ancestral homeland and his embrace of his original, hereditary “race.”

As Disraeli became more involved in politics, incidents of anti-Semitism directed towards him began to grow. Although he was tolerated as first—as a novelty and an unimportant Member of Parliament (MP)—Disraeli soon began to rise through the ranks of his party. As he rose to positions of leadership in the Conservative Party, attacks on Disraeli by members of his own party, and people who shared the same political ideologies, focused on his ethnic background. Although Disraeli portrayed himself as a Christian in his early days as a politician, by the time he gained the party leadership, he began to embrace his Jewish identity. In fact, Disraeli used his Jewish identity to make himself a leading contender for higher political office in the years before he became Prime Minister. As he was an ambitious young politician, Disraeli saw that his Judaism could help him to come to the attention of his party, and used his religious background as a spring board to the higher levels of the Conservative Party leadership. Comments regarding Disraeli’s inability to lead his party also focused on his controversial ethnic background, including statements made in 1859 and 1867 regarding his lack of leadership abilities. Disraeli was referred to as “that nasty, oily, slimy Jew” by his fellow party members in 1859. This derision towards Disraeli was only one example from a long list of personal attacks. In 1867, Disraeli endured two main attacks. A leading female Conservative supporter, the Duchess of Buccleuch, claimed: “we can never have a united party as long as Dizzy is the head of it.” In the other, a Conservative MP, outright criticized Disraeli for being a Jew: “That hellish Jew has got us in his power.” Disraeli overcame these and other instances of anti-Semitism by using his considerable oratory and persuasive skills to convince his party that he was the most qualified member to lead the government.

One area of governmental policy determined by Disraeli as Prime Minister was foreign affairs. Britain embraced its imperial tendencies during the second half of the nineteenth century. During the time Disraeli was in power, he embroiled the empire in several military engagements. The most important country affected by these engagements, Afghanistan, provides a case study for the relations between Disraeli and Gladstone in the last years of Disraeli’s power and life. The relations between the two men recounted in their both private letters and diaries and those of their friends and fellow politicians. Although the relationship between the two men was often contentious, their private papers reveal that mutual degree of respect did remain between them.

In addition to their personal papers, contemporary newspapers reveal a great deal about the interpersonal dynamic between Gladstone and Disraeli. The Times and The Manchester Guardian each had their own ideological favorite between the Conservative

233 Ibid., 118-119.
234 In his work on Disraeli, Vincent does not give Disraeli’s critics names, instead he just provides his readers with descriptions, such as “Tony Grandee,” and “eminent back bencher.” Vincent, 13.
235 Ibid. Disraeli was given the nickname “Dizzy” soon after he entered politics.
236 Ibid., 13-14.
237 Weintraub, 288-289.
and Liberal Parties. As *The Times* indicates in their coverage of Disraeli, the publication is clearly biased towards the Conservative Party. *The Times* has been referred to as a bastion of conservative thinking, always supporting the Conservative Party and the monarchy.\(^{238}\) In contrast, *The Manchester Guardian* had a markedly more Liberal bent. Evidence of this bent is plentiful, but one of the more remarkable examples was the newspaper’s coverage of Gladstone’s famous Midlothian speech.\(^{239}\)

The third newspaper which allows insight into the relationship between Gladstone and Disraeli is *The Times of India*. Written in India, by British citizens living in the empire, this paper provides an imperial perspective on the two men. *The Times of India* is not as biased towards either political party, as the editions were willing to highlight the achievements of both Gladstone and Disraeli equally. In addition, the paper chose to republish stories from several different British newspapers in an attempt to provide British citizens living abroad with a picture of the life they left behind in mainland Britain. The newspapers republished by *The Times of India* include both *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. As *The Times of India* reprinted articles from both papers, the editors wanted their readers to gain both newspapers’ perspectives on national and international events.

Several articles in the *Times of India* focus on the dynamic between Disraeli and Gladstone. Selected articles include one from when Disraeli was in power, and one from the time of Gladstone, allowing for an equal comparison of the two leaders. The first article is from 1878, when Disraeli and the Conservative Party were in control of Britain’s government. Concerns over Russian involvement in Central Asia had begun to surface in India. In the editorial section of *The Times of India* from March of that year, the editors made the following comments regarding Disraeli: “The Conservatives were all through suspicious of that power, and the sentiments of the party were more accurately expressed by Lord Beaconsfield…The inference is obvious. The Prime Minister, who is as much opposed to Russian aggrandisement as---be it said with due respect---Her Majesty herself, has now a united nation behind him [on the possibility of war in Afghanistan].”\(^{240}\) This editorial comment follows a favorable discussion of one of the articles Gladstone wrote for *The Nineteenth Century*.\(^{241}\) The editors of *The Times of India* treated both politicians in a fair and balanced manner. Disraeli is given more respect and coverage in this article, but he was also the sitting Prime Minister.

The first editorial that ran in *The Times of India* in 1880 indicates the manner that the editors of the paper took towards the newly elected Prime Minister, Gladstone. The editorial begins with a very neutral tone in discussing a speech regarding Indian Affairs given by Gladstone at Glasgow, “Probably no more apt example of the strengths and weaknesses of Mr. Gladstone’s character as a statesman could readily be found than his Glasgow speech on Indian Affairs.”\(^{242}\) Continuing their analysis of Gladstone, the paper included a fairly unfavorable assessment of sentiment in India towards their new leader, “It goes without saying that, whatever his [Gladstone’s] views may be regarding the

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\(^{238}\) For more of a discussion on the biases of *The Times* see Chapters Two and Four.

\(^{239}\) For a discussion on press coverage of Gladstone’s Midlothian speech, see Chapter Four. For more information on the biases held by *The Manchester Guardian* see Chapters Two and Four, which include a discussion on where sources can be found that explain these biases.

\(^{240}\) Editorial, *The Times of India* March 9, 1878.

\(^{241}\) For more information on the articles Gladstone authored for *The Nineteenth Century*, see Chapter Four.

Government of India, or the wisdom or folly of the acts of the executive, the ordinary Anglo-Indian can have little sympathy with the unbridled invective which has become the bad fashion among the school of home politicians of whom Mr. Gladstone...is [one of the] informing spirits.”

_The Times of India_ does not seem to feel that either of the politicians in their time as Prime Minister fully understood the importance of India to British foreign policy. Although the coverage was not favorable, it was balanced. _The Times of India_ did favor Disraeli more than Gladstone, since his ambitions toward Afghanistan indicated a greater amount of attention would be paid to the region. Media coverage of Gladstone and Disraeli in Britain did not provide as balanced a picture to their local readers.

In addition to media coverage of relations between Gladstone and Disraeli, other sources provide insight into contemporary opinions of the two men. A pamphlet by a former Under-Secretary of State for India, Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, published during the election campaign of 1880, contained anti-Disraeli vitriol. The author clearly identifies more with the Liberal Party, even though he never officially declares his party affiliation. Although Duff is careful to include the fact that the Liberal government was unable to pass all the blame for the problem in Afghanistan to the Conservative Party, he does make it clear that the Liberal government was the first to realize the impending problem caused by Russian expansion into Central Asia, “The Liberals and not the Conservatives who took the initiative in calling the attention of the country, through the House of Commons, to the advance of Russia in Central Asia.”

Duff also focuses on the problems of the Conservative government, in addition to allotting credit to the Liberal Party for recognizing Russian advancement. He includes a statement that chastises Disraeli’s government for ignoring policies begun by the Liberal Party, under Gladstone. Duff’s bias against the Conservative Party led him to accuse Disraeli of policies that led to a breakdown in the dialogue between Britain and Russia. He wrote, in his pamphlet, _The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government and Its Results_, the following condemnation of Disraeli: “The Beaconsfield Government has by its own act completely altered the aspect of affairs under which Russia bound herself to Mr. Gladstone’s Government, and has broken down every conventional barrier to her advance. The outbreak of a war could have done no less.” Duff’s opinion of Disraeli may have been shared by a significant portion of Britain’s voting population as can be evidenced in his party’s loss in the election of 1880.

The words to a song, sent to Gladstone by a constituent named Squire Judson, also indicated that Disraeli had lost a significant portion of the country’s popular support. In this musical tribute, which Judson claims was written solely for Gladstone’s enjoyment, the words of a traditional song, “The Oldest Man at Tea,” were converted to a new air: “When Gladstone Leads the Way.” The entirety of the song focuses on Gladstone’s achievements, and highlights how he, in the opinion of Judson, is a better

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243 Ibid.
244 For more discussions of media coverage of Disraeli and Gladstone in _The Times_ and _The Manchester Guardian_ see Chapters One through Four, and below in this chapter.
246 Ibid., 36.
prime minister than Disraeli. One stanza read as follows, providing a window into anti-
Disraeli sentiments:

I next thought of our Government, by their actions it would seem
That Beaconsfield and Company of powder only dream;
In Zulu and Afghanistan they’ve led a pretty dance,
They seem determined for to fight, if they only have the chance.
They think not of the burthens [sic] under which the people groan,
They care not for our weeping wives and orphans left at home;
‘Tis time that we had peace abroad and the sword aside did lay,
But I think that will never be till Gladstone leads the way.  

Squire Judson makes mention of both “Zulu and Afghanistan.” Zulu refers to another
imperial project that the British became involved with during the Disraeli
administration. In his paean to Gladstone, Judson also mentions the plight of the
British people who are waiting for their soldiers to come home from imperial military
commitments. By highlighting this, he seeks to elect a leader who will draw these
imperial ambitions to a close, a role which the author feels Gladstone will fulfill.

Disraeli’s political career was ended by his loss to Gladstone in the elections of
1880. Although Disraeli took the end of his career well, retiring from the public eye with
grace, Queen Victoria did not react nearly as gracefully. She was very annoyed by the
loss of her favorite Prime Minister, to the point that she did not want to officially appoint
his successor. Queen Victoria and Disraeli exchanged several letters regarding Disraeli’s
resignation. In these letters, the Queen revealed her dependence on Disraeli. In a letter
she wrote to the man she wished to form a new government after the Conservative
government fell, Lord Hartington, Queen Victoria complained:

There are times when people should have no hearts or feelings—for what
can be more cruel than for a female Sovereign no longer young, severely
tried—without a husband or any one person on whose help (when her
valued Minister leaves her) she can securely rest, to have to take those
people who have done all they could to vilify and weaken her Govt.? Can
she have confidence in them?  

Queen Victoria greatly loved and admired Disraeli. She was not the least bit fond
of Gladstone, as her writings on Disraeli’s resignation attest. Although Gladstone served
as Prime Minister for the same length of time, if not longer than Disraeli, Victoria never
gained the same level of comfort with Gladstone as she did with Disraeli. “Dizzy” would
remain Victoria’s favorite Prime Minister, even though her reign extended for another
twenty years after his death.  

248 The Zulu War occurred in South Africa in 1877. British troop losses in this war were excessive, and
contributed to the growing anti-imperialist sentiment in Britain. For more information on the Zulu War
see Bernard Porter, The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995 Third Edition
249 Letter from Queen Victoria to Lord Beaconsfield April 21, 1880, reprinted in Buckle, 537.
250 See Buckle, 616-618 for several instances of Queen Victoria’s grief at Disraeli’s death.
Gladstone’s reaction to Disraeli’s death provides a great deal of insight into his personal feelings regarding his long term political rival. When Gladstone was first informed of Disraeli’s imminent death, he sent telegrams to Lord Beaconsfield’s house, and received daily medical bulletins on Disraeli’s health.\textsuperscript{251} When Gladstone received the telegram sent at 7 AM in the morning of April 19, 1881 which simply stated: “Lord Beaconsfield died at four thirty this morning,” his first impulse was to offer a public, state funeral for Disraeli.\textsuperscript{252} As Gladstone noted in his diary after hearing of the death, “It is a telling, touching event. There is no more extraordinary man surviving him in England, perhaps none in Europe. I immediately sent to tender a public funeral.”\textsuperscript{253} The immediate offer of a public state funeral was gratefully recognized by the executors of Disraeli’s estate, but the family declined a public funeral. Instead, they chose to have a smaller, private service.

Disraeli had been sick for about a month before he died in April 1881. As he was a much beloved figure in England, the press covered his last illness quite extensively. The details of his sickness were presented to the public by both The Times and The Manchester Guardian. The Times, in its section which served as Disraeli’s obituary, included the responses of many foreign newspapers to his death. All the papers include praise of Disraeli the man, both as a novelist and as a Prime Minister. The Times’ article includes a survey of responses from the governments and presses of several European countries.\textsuperscript{254}

Reaction to Disraeli’s death was found in many newspapers from all over the world. The Times included reactions from Parisian newspapers in their coverage. Even in international papers, the long running political struggle between Gladstone and Disraeli is referenced. One of the papers cited by The Times in its obituary of Disraeli editorialized the following regarding the two men: “The Legitimist Universal regards Lord Beaconsfield’s death as a great loss for the Tory party, which is thereby deprived of the most capable of its leaders, just when it needed all his experience to counteract the Whig or rather Gladstonian party, which is gently leading England to practical Radicalism.”\textsuperscript{255} Although the French newspaper is clearly biased towards a more conservative form of government, Disraeli’s significance to the development of the Conservative Party cannot be forgotten, even by a newspaper which normally supported his rival, Gladstone.

The Times also presented reactions to the death in papers from both Germany and Italy. Like the French newspapers, these papers also focused on the importance of Disraeli to world politics. The report from Italy was rather short, but The Times’ columnist makes the respect felt for Disraeli quite clear. The Italian press wrote laudatory biographies of Disraeli, which in the words of the columnist, was “noteworthy inasmuch as the general impression prevailed that his policy was not favourable to Italy.”\textsuperscript{256} Disraeli was held in high esteem personally, even if the policies he espoused were not

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{251} Telegrams from Lord Rowlson to Gladstone on April 12, 15, and 18 all contained updates on Disraeli’s health. All of these telegrams can be found in The British Library Additional Manuscript 44469.
\item \textsuperscript{252} Telegram from Central News London to Gladstone April 19, 1881, 7 AM, in Additional Manuscript 44469.
\item \textsuperscript{254} “The Death of the Earl of Beaconsfield,” Times (London) page 9 column 5-6, page 10 column 1-2 April 20, 1881.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Ibid. Times, pg. 10 col. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{256} Ibid. Times, pg. 10 col. 1-2.
\end{itemize}
favorable to a particular country. This trend of at least personal approbation was also apparent in the German newspapers, as *The Times*’ columnist in Berlin concluded tellingly: “All the evening newspapers have biographical articles on the deceased peer, and it will suffice to characterize them all if I say that they write of him in a tone of the highest respect and admiration, as if, indeed, he had been a German instead of an Englishman.” 257 This is high praise indeed, coming from a German paper of the time period, as the general idea in Germany was that the citizens of their country were superior to those of other countries.

*The Manchester Guardian* chose to highlight the continental reaction to Disraeli’s death in a simple article, entitled “Opinion on the Continent.” This article solely references the German reaction to the death, but this one reaction neatly sums up most international reaction to the passing of Lord Beaconsfield: “All the evening papers allude in terms of sympathy to the death of the Earl of Beaconsfield…that with him ends the active life of one of the most eminent men of modern times who have faithfully devoted themselves to the advancement of the greatness and welfare of their country.” 258 As a survey of these articles indicates, even if Disraeli was not personally liked, even if his policies were not always popular, he was an eminent figure who deserved to be honored on the occasion of his death.

Even though England was involved in a war with Russia, the Russian papers were full of praise for Disraeli on the occasion of his death. *The Times*’ article which described the reaction in France also references the Russian papers’ reaction to Disraeli’s death. 259 The strategy of reprinting quotations from foreign newspapers, used by both *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*, allowed members of the British public to gauge foreign reaction, even from countries that Britain was currently engaged in war with, to the death of their highly respected leader. However, although these newspapers provided their readers with an understanding of the foreign press, it must be noted that the foreign news was filtered through the biases of either *The Times* or *The Manchester Guardian*.

In addition to responses from foreign countries, newspapers also provided their readers with reactions to Disraeli’s death from his former constituents. 260 *The Manchester Guardian* conducted a much larger study of the impact of Disraeli’s death, including separate entries on the reaction of several large counties in Britain. Responses covered in *The Manchester Guardian* include the lowering of flags to half-mast, events being cancelled, and memorials to Disraeli being read in public events. The newspaper includes a section on reaction in Glasgow, a traditionally liberal city. *The Manchester Guardian* editorialized, in the section entitled “Glasgow:” “At Glasgow, as soon as the news became known, the flags of the clubs, leading hotels, and other public buildings were hoisted half-mast high. Political feeling was set aside, and the great loss which the country had sustained in the death of the distinguished statesman was acknowledged.” 261 The recognition given to Glasgow’s reaction in *The Manchester Guardian* advances the argument that grief from Disraeli’s death was a countrywide phenomenon.

257 Ibid. *Times* pg. 10 col. 2.
258 "The Death of the Earl of Beaconsfield," *Manchester Guardian* page 5-6April 20, 1881.
259 "The Death of the Earl of Beaconsfield," *The Times* page 10 column 1 April 20, 1881.
260 Ibid., *Times* and "The Death of the Earl of Beaconsfield," *Manchester Guardian* page 5 columns 3-6 and all of page 6April 20, 1881.
261 Ibid., *Guardian* pg. 6 col. 4.
Like *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Times* also featured responses to Disraeli’s death in Britain. Before explaining individual county’s reactions to the tragic news, *The Times* includes an editorial note on countrywide reaction: “Upon the fact of Lord Beaconsfield’s death becoming known throughout the country early in the morning a widespread[sic] feeling of regret was publicly manifested totally irrespective of political parties.”\(^262\) Both newspapers are careful to inform their readers that politics had no impact on responses to the death. This is a departure from the usual partisan tone used by newspapers when describing either Gladstone or Disraeli.\(^263\)

Even though the two politicians had their differences, Gladstone’s reaction to Disraeli’s death was one of great praise. Although he had the unenviable task of eulogizing his former political opponent, Gladstone rose to the challenge. He referred to Disraeli’s many qualities in a speech he gave to Parliament. Mentioning qualities that were “not only written in a marked manner on his career, but possessed by him in a degree undoubtedly extraordinary,” Gladstone commended his former foe.\(^264\) He continued by comparing himself to Disraeli, giving examples of Disraeli’s exemplary qualifications, and even admitting that he was not the equal of Disraeli in terms of political courage.:  

There were certain great qualities of the deceased statesman that I think it right to dwell upon…----qualities immediately connected with conduct---with regard to which I would say, were I a younger man, that I should like to stamp the recollection of them on myself for my own future guidance, and with regard to which I would confidently say to others who are younger than myself that I strongly recommend them due notice and imitation. They were qualities not only written in a marked manner on his career, but possessed by him in a degree undoubtedly extraordinary. I speak, for example, of such as these---his strength of will; his long-sighted persistency of purpose reaching from his first entrance upon the avenue of life to its very close; his remarkable power of self-government; and last, but not least, of all, his great parliamentary courage---a quality in which I, who have been associated in the course of my life with some scores of Ministers, have, I think, never known but two whom I could pronounce his equal.\(^265\)

Gladstone’s memorial of his rival shows a remarkable amount of the respect he felt for him. This speech is one of the only places where Gladstone chose to enumerate the qualities he most admired in Disraeli. Gladstone wanted to emulate his rival, finally recognizing upon Disraeli’s death that although the two leaders had their differences, the Conservative leader had some qualities that he admired.

Gladstone’s response in his own correspondence shows more of his own feelings regarding Disraeli. Although the two men often disagreed on issues of policy, Gladstone

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\(^262\) “The Death of the Earl of Beaconsfield,” *The Times* page 10 column 2 April 20, 1881.

\(^263\) As seen previously in this chapter, newspapers’ coverage often reflected their editors’ political biases.

\(^264\) Buckle, 622.

\(^265\) This is a quotation from Gladstone’s eulogy for Disraeli given at the first meeting of Parliament after the Easter Recess. Disraeli’s death occurred during the Easter Recess of 1881. Ibid., 622-623.
still retained genuine feelings of admiration for Disraeli, as are revealed in both the
eulogizing speech he gave, and a letter he wrote to the Duke of Argyll:

This sad event in London [Disraeli’s death] dwells much upon my mind.
The persistency of his conjugal affection is very touching. There above all
things he was human. Taking the thing as a whole it is very mournful.
Should it prove to be my duty to propose a public monument for him,
what an irony of fortune! But if it prove to be duty it must be done: and
yet must be done truthfully.266

Gladstone also expressed his feelings regarding Disraeli in a letter he wrote to Queen
Victoria. He wrote, upon hearing the news of Disraeli’s sad demise, “Occasions like this,
of deep and touching national interest are, in Mr. Gladstone’s [he referred to himself in
the third person] view, governed by general rules, entirely beyond the reach of the
controversies which belong to differences between political parties.”267 Nevertheless,
although Gladstone wrote multiple platitudes for his departed rival, these opinions of
Disraeli were tempered by the fact that he was writing and speaking in the days following
the charismatic figurehead of the Conservative Party’s death.

Disraeli’s opinion of his rival was also well known to his contemporaries.
Although he did not have as public a forum to discuss his personal feelings regarding
Gladstone, Disraeli still made his sentiments on his long-term rival available to both his
friends, fellow Conservative Party members, and the general public. Disraeli considered
Gladstone to be vindictive. Several letters he wrote to his friends mention this
vindictiveness.268 In fact, Disraeli’s feelings regarding Gladstone were transparent
enough that after a visit to one of his friends, Sir Stafford Northcote, Northcote made the
following notation in his diary: “He [Disraeli] spoke strongly of Gladstone’s
vindictiveness, an element never to be left out of sight in calculating the course of events.
It was a great fault in the Leader of a party, who ought to be above personal feelings.”269
Although the leader of the party, as Northcote calls Disraeli, felt this way about his
opponent, he was never accused of being anything but civil towards Gladstone in face to
face meetings.270

However, in his novels, Disraeli found another outlet to express his true
sentiments on his political rival. In a novel begun before his death, Disraeli introduced a
new character named “A.V.,” or “Arch Villain.” Tellingly, this was also the name
Disraeli used to refer to Gladstone in his personal correspondence.271 The new character
was named Falconet, which contemporaries felt was a reference to Gladstone’s personal
appearance, as many of his peers believed that he facially resembled a bird. In the portrait
Disraeli painted of Falconet, he wrote the following: “His memory was vigorous, ready,
and retentive; but his chief peculiarity was his disputatious temper.” This is only one example of techniques used by Disraeli in his description of Gladstone. He begins a statement with praise, but tempers the praise with criticism before ending his statements. Disraeli was unable to write a single sentence which solely praised his political opponent.

The relationship between Gladstone and Disraeli was fractious at times, including the examples cited above. Nonetheless, although contentious, the relationship was an important one that dominated the political scene in Britain. As D.C. Somervell opined in the conclusion to his comparative analysis of Disraeli and Gladstone, on the legacy of these two men’s battles:

…”[There] was no mere blind hero-worship on either side. For in the last great battles between Disraeli and Gladstone, fundamental principles of statesmanship were at stake, on the one side Imperialism [Disraeli] and on the other Internationalism [Gladstone]. The terms are painfully inadequate, nor do we mean to imply that a wise Imperialism cannot be reconciled with a reasonable Internationalism. But it may be granted that the statesman owes…a divided duty. He has a duty to his own people…and a duty to the rest of the world. The Beaconsfield policy concentrated on the first duty and showed a tendency to ignore the claims of the second; the Gladstonian protest concentrated on political altruism with a vehemence which was apt to forget the due claims of patriotism.”

Differences between Gladstone and Disraeli are evident in the way they approached the British Empire, including the examples introduced by Somervell. Although Somervell focuses more on the imperialism/internationalism divide between the two politicians, the hostility that this divide aroused in the Conservative leader and the Liberal leader is still apparent, even in a later historical analysis. These concluding remarks by Somervell show how the policies espoused by the two political parties are seen in the actions of the two leaders.

As Gladstone’s kind words eulogizing Disraeli indicate, although there were large differences between the two men, and the policies they chose to enact, both men could find some similarities that they had in common. Disraeli was a man shaped by strong moral values, as was Gladstone. Their moral values—Gladstone’s convictions and Disraeli’s principles—were extremely different, but in the end, both leaders’ policies regarding Afghanistan were made with the best interests of the nation at heart.

One of Disraeli’s last appearances in Parliament, made in February 1881, when he was already in ill health, was on the issue of Afghanistan. Contemporaries commented on his ill state of health, but were impressed by the conviction he spoke with, even in his weakened condition. In his penultimate speech, Disraeli argued for the British government to adopt a policy of containment in Afghanistan. He also introduced his famous quote on the situation in Afghanistan: “the key of India is in London.” By this statement, Disraeli meant that the solution to the Second Afghan War, and his fears of

272 Bradford, 383.
274 Bradford, 387; Buckle, 603.
Russian involvement would have to be diplomatic; solved by ambassadors in London, not on the ground in Central Asia.

The speech on Afghanistan was designed to wound Gladstone. It was Disraeli’s final attempt at forcing Gladstone to understand that the problems in the region were caused by Russia, and that a fear of Russia was necessary in understanding the situation in Afghanistan. As Sarah Bradford refers to Disraeli’s character in her analysis of this speech: “This was the old Disraeli, demonstrating that despite his age and health he still had the capacity to wound. He was indeed already a very sick man...he had drugged himself in order to be able to make his final challenge to Gladstone on the question of Empire.” 275 Even in his weakened state, Disraeli could not resist challenging his long term rival on their final battle, the question of Afghanistan.

Gladstone and Disraeli’s relationship only represents one element in British politics that formed the situation in Afghanistan. Although this situation had many ramifications in the way that the British treated their empire, the British experience in Afghanistan also had far reaching circumstances in British politics. The death of Disraeli heralded a period of decline in the preeminence of the Conservative Party in Britain. Nonetheless, the party would regroup, but not until the end of the nineteenth century. For all intents and purposes, the battle between Disraeli and Gladstone marked the end of the traditional Conservative Party values. 276

Two different perspectives on imperialism and the role of Britain in a formerly sovereign country colored relations between Gladstone and Disraeli. However, Gladstone had the unfortunate opportunity to express his affinity for Disraeli after he died. Disraeli did not have the same opportunity to speak about Gladstone, and an opinion colored by his hindsight is not available to historians as a result. Perhaps if Disraeli was forced to eulogize Gladstone, then he would have been forced to make laudatory comments on his rival.

Even Disraeli’s biographer regards Gladstone as the more moral of the two men. In the conclusion to his multi-part work on Disraeli, Robert Blake includes the following statement regarding the relations between the two men. “Morally and intellectually Gladstone was his [Disraeli’s] superior. In courage, great though Disraeli’s was, Gladstone was certainly not his inferior.” 277 Blake’s words are exemplary of nineteenth century connotations of the two men. Gladstone is regarded as superior to Disraeli, but at the same time, Disraeli is not regarded as an ineffective and cowardly leader either. In his eulogy of Disraeli, Gladstone, although laudatory was not immune to recognizing the differences between his and Disraeli’s personalities.

By comparing the morality of these two very different figureheads, a clear picture of British policy emerges. An understanding of British policies in Afghanistan would be impossible without a level of comprehension of the political situation in London at the same time as the British were waging war a continent away. However, the political arguments between Gladstone and Disraeli ended in 1881. The Second Afghan War did

275 Bradford, 387.
276 The Conservative Party next held the office of Prime Minister in 1885, but this election was the first in which the Conservative Party won through the combination of the party and Liberal Unionists. For more information on the changing makeup of the Conservative Party see Martin Pugh, The Making of Modern British Politics 1867-1945 Third Edition (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 54.
277 Blake, Disraeli 765.
not draw to an official close until 1882. By the time the Second Afghan War was completed, Gladstonian policies had won the contest over which brand of imperialism would be followed in the British Empire.

Liberal Imperialism, resulting from these Gladstonian policies was first introduced to Afghanistan in the year after Disraeli died. A final solution to problems in the country would not be found until 1885, but the introduction of local autonomy, heralded a new policy for Britain in the region.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION—THE BEGINNING OF A “NEW” IMPERIALISM

At the end of the Second Afghan War and Britain’s ensuing determination to remove troops from Central Asia, several questions remained: Why was Afghanistan vital to the formation of new British imperial policies? Why was this small, insignificant country destined to be the area which forced a change in lasting imperial thought for one of the most powerful countries in the world? Why did the British public react to events in Afghanistan in a manner that forced this change in policy? Did the actions of “The Great Game” negatively impact the conditions in Britain to the point that policy makers believed they needed to change their thoughts regarding empire? How was it that Afghanistan, only important to the empire because of its location as a buffer zone between Britain and Russia, provided the impetus for an entirely new category of imperialist discourse in nineteenth century British thought?

All of these questions are valid. However, the British experience in Afghanistan must be considered in conjunction with other imperialist endeavors that the empire undertook in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Several of these maneuvers were considered unsuccessful in the eyes of both the British public and the government who served them. These exercises, including both the Second Afghan War and the Zulu War, in South Africa, only served as examples of failures that the British needed to correct as their empire continued to grow and prosper. The ramifications of these unsuccessful policies inspired members of the British government to coin their new imperial policies.

The Liberal Party controlled the British government at the conclusion of the Second Afghan War in 1881. This was not the case at the end of the Zulu War, but shortly after that military experiment had been resolved, in 1878, William Ewart Gladstone and his party regained control of the country. With the Liberal Party now enacting foreign policy, a new era in the British imperial experience began. It was characterized by many policies, never before introduced in British politics, several of which commenced in the aftermath of the British Afghan experience.

New imperialist ideas embraced by the Liberal Party included the idea of limited local autonomy. This concept of a ruler being allowed to govern without a great deal of British interference is apparent in the decision to support the rise of a local Afghani ruler, Amir Abdur Rahman, to the throne of Afghanistan, at Kabul. His ascension is indicative of these new policies as he was a homegrown leader in Afghanistan, and thereby not handpicked by a British governor.

Although the beginning of Abdur Rahman’s reign marked a turning point in British policies toward Afghanistan, his original appointment was not accomplished without a large amount of worry and hesitation on the part of the British government in

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278 Bernard Porter, *The Lion’s Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1995*, Third Edition (London: Longman, 1996), 111. Porter makes specific reference to the fact that the British people felt they were being forced into their role as imperialists, as a pre-emptive strike against anyone who attacked the British Empire.
As Abdur Rahman was an unknown quantity, never before considered by the British as a viable option to lead his country, his rise to power was an unexpected consequence of the British decision to invade Afghanistan.

Before the British chose to enthrone Abdur Rahman, much discussion occurred in the private and official correspondence between Gladstone and his Viceroy in India, Lord Ripon. The two men disagreed on whether to appoint either Abdur Rahman or Yakub Khan to the position of Amir. Private letters between Lords Hartington and Ripon indicate this disagreement. A letter from June 18, 1880 includes the following thoughts on the appointment of another ruler rather than Yakub Khan: “You can issue a proclamation when the time comes for retirement [from Afghanistan], say that you are now going to return, that you will not allow Yacoob [sic] to be restored, that you would have directed them to establish a powerful ruler if they could have agreed upon…but as they cannot you leave them to settle their own affairs.” Officials of British policy begun under the reign of Gladstone’s predecessor, Benjamin Disraeli, supported Yakub Khan, the son of the recently deceased Amir, Sher Ali Khan. Although Sher Ali’s lack of response to the ultimatum from Lord Lytton was, at least in official British documents of the time, responsible for beginning the Second Afghan War, the British government did not want to see him replaced by another ruler. One lesson learned by the conclusion of the First Afghan War was that the Afghani people did not react well to the British replacing one legitimate leader with another who was perceived to be a puppet of the British, and hence illegitimate. This was the case with the replacement of Dost Mohammed by Shah Shujah, a decision which had unfortunate repercussions for the British.

The process by which the First Afghan War was concluded—a treaty that indicated the British could leave a Resident in the country who would, in theory, have control over foreign affairs—left a permanent mark on British policies for Central Asia. Conflict with Russia conducted through a third party would not occur again in the region until the dawn of the Second Afghan War. However, in the fifty years between the two wars, a number of details had changed in the relationship between these two imperial powers. Shifts in the power balance of Europe made foreign policy decisions regarding Russia paramount at the end of the 1870s. As the Eastern Question had demonstrated, Britain and Russia began to be drawn into conflicts based on alliances signed with other countries. European politics was slowly progressing in the arena of world-wide politics by the end of the decade. The Eastern Question, which occurred several years after the Crimean War ended in 1856, cemented the roles that Britain and Russia would adopt in their decisions regarding third party states in Europe.

280 Lord Hartington was writing on behalf of the Liberal government, hence the views he expressed in his letters included Gladstone’s official policies.
281 Letter from Hartington to Ripon, June 18, 1880 in the British Library Additional Manuscript 43569.
282 The transition from Sher Ali to Yakub Khan is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. Yakub Khan became Amir of Afghanistan in February 1879. He also signed the Treaty of Gandamuk ending the first phase of the Second Afghan War in May 1879.
Conditions that resulted from this new dynamic in European relations were taken into consideration in the invention of the “new” imperialism which was espoused by the Liberal Party. Although Liberal imperialism was not even mentioned in British foreign policy until three years after the conclusion of the Second Afghan War, the main ideas behind this new imperialist discourse—limited local autonomy and sentimental feelings regarding the people included in the empire—had already begun to permeate policy decisions made by the Liberal Party.

However, before the Liberal Party arrived at this new type of imperialism, its leaders were forced to acknowledge that imperialism has some positive benefits for the British, a concept which was anathema to traditional values the party espoused.284 One of the first events which convinced the party that imperialism was sometimes necessary was the outcome of the Second Afghan War. The Liberal Party realized that in order to maintain Afghanistan as a buffer zone between the British and Russian empires, it was necessary to give a degree of control back to a local ruler.285

The idea of limited autonomy proved to be a long-lasting element in British foreign policy dating from this time through the end of the empire.286 Local autonomy allowed the British to plead ignorance of certain decisions made by their appointed representatives, but it still allowed the government to step in and take control of the country when British needs dictated. Treaties signed after the adoption of this new directive always granted complete command of foreign affairs to the British. The policy of having a country agree to outside British control still counted as a tacit territorial annexation by the sprawling British Empire; however, the citizens of the country felt that they remained in charge of their own destiny.

Granting limited local autonomy was a prescient decision for the British government. In 1885, Britain was once again on the verge of open warfare with the Russian government regarding Russia’s incursion into Afghani territory. This incursion, known as the Pandjeh incident, occurred in a small village on the de facto border between Russian territory and Afghanistan. As a result of their treaty granting limited autonomy, the British felt forced to intervene in Afghanistan, as territory they considered Afghani—and by extension, British—was threatened by Russian imperialist machinations.

Policies formulated by British politicians regarding Russian involvement in the region reflected the continuation of anti-Russian feelings which had run rampant during the Second Afghan War. These feelings are reflected in notes Gladstone made in response to the unwelcome presence in Pandjeh. In these notes he included the idea that both Russia and Afghanistan were incorrect in their assessments of what side of the border the village was located, and the idea that issue could be settled solely by diplomatic means. As he wrote: “Propose to Russia that both [are] incorrect, their agents to avoid all fresh occupations of doubtful spots, and that both agree to push their views by diplomatic claim and conference of the cabinets.”287 There is no mention in his notes of the possibility of a military solution. Nonetheless, Gladstone did propose a solution,

284 For more information on these traditional values, see Chapter One.
287 Gladstone’s notes on the situation in Afghanistan, February 25, 1885. In these notes, Gladstone details his opinions on Afghanistan, including what he believes will be the most equitable solution. These notes are held as part of the Gladstone papers at the British Library, Additional Manuscript, 44769.
adopted later by many members of his party, that Afghanistan’s borders should be officially demarcated. Believing that incidents like the one at Pandjeh would happen repeatedly until the border dispute was settled, Gladstone wanted an international consensus of where Afghanistan ended and Russia began.

However, although Gladstone believed that a military solution was not the answer to the problem, several factions in his government did not agree with his assessment, instead agitating for possible military involvement. This difference of opinion is covered by A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch in their study of British foreign policy: “Gladstone set his face sternly against the party which had again appealed to angry passions.”288 Luckily, as history shows, this militaristic answer was not applied to the Pandjeh incident. Instead, thanks to the admirable diplomatic skills of the Amir of Afghanistan, the situation ended without any bloodshed.

Abdur Rahman realized it would be in his best interest to see a peaceful conclusion of the Pandjeh incident. He used the treaty he signed with the British, and the weakened state of the Gladstone government to try to come to an equitable solution regarding his country’s boundaries. If the British had not implemented local autonomy, then Abdur Rahman would have had no effect on the discussions which ultimately resolved the conflict. At the end of the incident, a decision was made to demarcate a permanent border, following a suggestion made by Gladstone in his memo. The Panjdeh incident was resolved in May of 1885, with Gladstone taking some credit for the successful end to what could have potentially been a calamitous situation for the British Empire.

Soon after the Panjdeh incident, Gladstone resigned from the government. Although his resignation was motivated by many issues, including the continued failures of British foreign policy and ever mounting imperial expenditures, Gladstone never specifically cited imperial policies as a reason for his resignation. Instead, he blamed his resignation on the failure of his government to reach a budget in the face of opposition from members of the Conservative Party.289 Gladstone exited politics in 1885 in much the same way he entered his second term as Prime Minister, embroiled in inter-party strife. Gladstone’s feud with the Conservative Party did not end with Disraeli’s death. As his reaction to the budgetary conflict which ended his term as Prime Minister showed, Gladstone remained steadfast to his moral virtues including his long stated commitment to what he believed was “right and proper,” and took the Conservative Party’s inability to compromise on a budget as a personal affront.

The government formed by the Conservative Party following Gladstone’s resignation tried to implement the same type of foreign policies as the Liberal Party had enacted during the five years it controlled the government. Continuity in these policies is remarkable, as it was one of the first times that ideas begun under the Liberal Party were embraced by the Conservatives. World politics had become paramount by 1885, when

288 Ward and Gooch, 190.
289 Telegram from Mr. Gladstone to Queen Victoria, June 11, 1885 in Philip Guedalla, ed., The Queen and Mr. Gladstone (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1934), 670. “Humble duty. Believe that to treat an attack on Budget by an ex-Cabinet Minister with such breadth of front and after all the previous occurrences otherwise than a vital question would have been contrary to all precedent, a notable instance in December 1852, and would tend to weaken and lower Parliamentary Government. In answer to your Majesty’s Question, the refusal to which it refers [Gladstone’s intent to resign] would obviously change the situation.”
this Conservative government under Lord Salisbury was formed. The recognition of a world-wide dynamic in political decisions grew out of the aftermath of the Second Afghan War. Salisbury realized that political decisions could not be made in a vacuum, and policies of isolation that had been embraced by previous leaders from his party would no longer be a viable foreign policy option to ensure the continued dominance of the British Empire.  

The Salisbury government did not remain in power long, only existing to finish out the term begun before Gladstone’s resignation. This Salisbury administration lasted until the very beginning of 1886, when a general election was held and he was replaced by a Liberal government, under Lord Rosebery. Rosebery was the man who coined the term “Liberal Imperialist” when he referred to himself as one in a speech he gave in 1885. Rosebery did not stay in office for a long time, yet his period as Prime Minister is important because it marked the first instance that the policies introduced by the Liberal party were officially given the designation of “Liberal Imperialism.” Realizing that it was necessary for the continuity of British superiority in the world, he essentially continued the policies begun by Gladstone and embraced by Salisbury in his caretaker government of 1885. However, Rosebery’s government, which began in 1887, allowed him to fully embrace the ideas of Liberal Imperialism. Initiatives begun by the British as a response to problems in Afghanistan had, by the end of the decade, been transformed into the ideals which motivated all of British foreign policy decisions.

At a first glance, when writing about Liberal Imperialism, Afghanistan would receive much less attention than the eventual partitioning of Africa, the subject which gains the most attention from historians on British imperialism in the 1880s. This is not the case. Without lessons learned by the failure of British policy during the First and Second Afghan Wars, the Liberal government under Gladstone might not have come to the policies of Liberal Imperialism. As a result of these failures, the British government embraced limited local autonomy, one of the most important features of Liberal Imperialism. Abdur Rahman proved that he was the correct choice for British interests in Afghanistan in the Panjdeh crisis. His appointment marked the beginning of Liberal Imperialism, even though it occurred several years before Rosebery coined the term.

Liberal Imperialism is a nebulous concept. It has no set beginning and no set end. Most historians, as was seen in Chapter One, agree that the notion had become a significant factor in foreign policy decisions by the first Rosebery government. After defining liberal imperialism, Afghanistan can clearly be seen as the catalyst which drove the Gladstone government to rectify failures in British imperial policy. Gladstone was never forced to retain imperialist goals begun by his predecessor, Benjamin Disraeli, but his decision to continue to see Afghanistan as a valid area for British involvement, influenced the rest of his administration’s foreign policy agenda.

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290 Harold Temperley and Lillian Penson, *Foundations of British Foreign Policy from Pitt (1792) to Salisbury (1902) or Documents, Old and New, Selected and Edited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 429.
291 For a section of the speech Rosebery gave claiming this identity see Chapter One.
292 Temperley and Penson, 433-434.
293 Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 204. Hyam details all of the events of the struggle and for more information see his chapter on the end of British isolation. The case of Africa also receives significant mention in every book found on imperialism used throughout this entire work.
Examining the events of the Second Afghan War, Chapter Two particularly emphasizes the similarities between the First and Second Afghan Wars. These relationships are important in understanding why the British chose to invade the country, and why the evacuation of the troops from Afghanistan was paramount to Gladstone’s foreign policy concerns. In addition, this chapter introduces problems that occurred between Britain and Russia in Central Asia. These events, which were part of “The Great Game” between the two empires, are vital in gaining an understanding of nineteenth century British politics.

The relationship between Britain and Russia, and its impact on foreign policy decisions made by both Disraeli and Gladstone is the most important development covered in Chapter Three. The question of Russia pervaded British foreign policy during the 1870s, as was indicated by the Eastern Question. In responses to the Eastern Question, not only is the opinion of the British public on imperialism in the 1870s visible, but Gladstone and Disraeli’s personal views are also opened to public consumption. Gladstone’s reaction to the Eastern Question and the development of what would become the Second Afghan War motivated him to reenter politics again following his retirement after his party’s loss in the elections of 1874.

Gladstone’s personal background and morality are the main focus of most debates regarding Afghanistan, as shown in Chapter Four. Without an understanding of both his background and what his contemporaries considered his morality, the Liberal Party’s policies which he created are much harder to comprehend. The coverage of his jubilee established the perception that Gladstone was a large factor in the creation of the policies that would become Liberal Imperialism and the major influence on his party for over five decades. Instead, once Gladstone’s background is studied, the dichotomies between Gladstone and his rival, Disraeli, can be understood.

The relationship between Gladstone and Disraeli characterizes Chapter Five. In this chapter, differences between the two men, and their often fractious relationship, are examined. From these leaders’ interactions, a more accurate picture of the outside forces which shaped their parties’ policies, from Disraeli’s Jewish identity, to Gladstone’s Christian morality, can be gained. Individual introductions of both men allow for a comparison, creating a deeper understanding of what formulated their policies.

It is impossible to pinpoint exactly when Liberal Imperialist ideas first began to ferment in the minds of nineteenth century politicians. Nevertheless, hindsight places the events in Afghanistan at the beginning of the discourse which formed Liberal Imperialism. The idea that imperialism was begun by the Liberal Party, co-opted by the Conservatives, and then taken back by the Liberal Party, is acknowledged by all historians. It is interesting though, that in the late 1870s, Gladstone branded Disraeli an imperialist. However, in the end, Gladstone and the Liberal Party heralded the beginnings of a “new” kind of imperialism for their country’s empire to embrace.
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76


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephanie Laffer received her Bachelors Degree in History and Political Science from the George Washington University. After receiving her degree, she worked for the library at the Washington, DC bureau of CNN. Her experiences working for the library during Operation Iraqi Freedom led to an interest in the way events in foreign countries invaded by other countries, like the case of the British in Afghanistan, were understood at home in the invading country. To this end, she chose to attend graduate school at Florida State University, where this thesis for her Masters Degree was written. Stephanie will continue her studies at Florida State, beginning the doctoral program this summer.