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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research Memorandum
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THE AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN BOUNDARY

The recent break in diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan results primarily from the political status of the Pathan tribes in Pakistan. While Afghanistan claims that it desires only to see an independent "Pushtunistan" and has no intention to annex territory, Pakistani observers feel that the statements serve as a mask for Afghan irredentism. Thus, while not basic to the "Pushtunistan" issue, the boundary does enter into the problem.

The intent of this brief paper is to clarify several misunderstandings about the boundary and to put it in its proper perspective.

Most observers refer to the boundary as the "Durand Line" and imply that it stems directly from the Anglo-Afghan Kabul Agreement of November 12, 1893. The Kabul Agreement stated:

"...

(1) The eastern and southern frontier of His Highness's dominions, from the Wakhan to the Persian border, shall follow the line shown on the map attached to this agreement.

"...

(4) The frontier line will hereafter be laid down in detail and demarcated wherever this may be practicable and desirable by Joint British and Afghan Commissioners, whose object will be to arrive by mutual understanding at a boundary which shall adhere with the greatest possible exactness to the line shown in the map attached to this agreement, having due regard to the existing local rights of villages adjoining the frontier ..."

The line was demarcated in places and surveyed in others by mixed commissions in 1894, 1895, and 1896. Their agreements have been published in Aitchison's Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads between India and its neighboring countries, (India), Ministry of External Affairs, 1929.

The British Foreign Office has made available^{1/} the (Durand) Kabul Agreement maps with the request that they be held confidentially and for the internal use of the U.S. only. The boundary shown on these documentary maps has been plotted in red on the annexed map. Since geographic inaccuracies were found which could not be reconciled with current information, the boundary has been designated thereon as "apparent boundary between British

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India and Afghanistan according to the treaty of 1893." The present boundary is shown in black. It is evident that the present boundary is considerably different from the original "Durand Line."

Sir Thomas Holdick, the famous Indian boundary surveyor, in his book The Indian Borderland (London, Methuen, 1901), made the following statements concerning the ultimate boundary:

"It is, however, defined by a line which at one point is at least seventy miles south of the position assigned to it by the Kabul Agreement. Concession was the ruling spirit of the demarcation." p. 239

"No part of the boundary defined south of the Hindu Kush was the actual boundary of the agreement..." p. 269

While a comparison of the maps does not wholly support the latter statement, there are enough indications to sustain it as an "enthusiastic generalization." The Afghanistan - Pakistan boundary, although it may defy geography, strategy, and ethnography, is a product of negotiation and compromise.

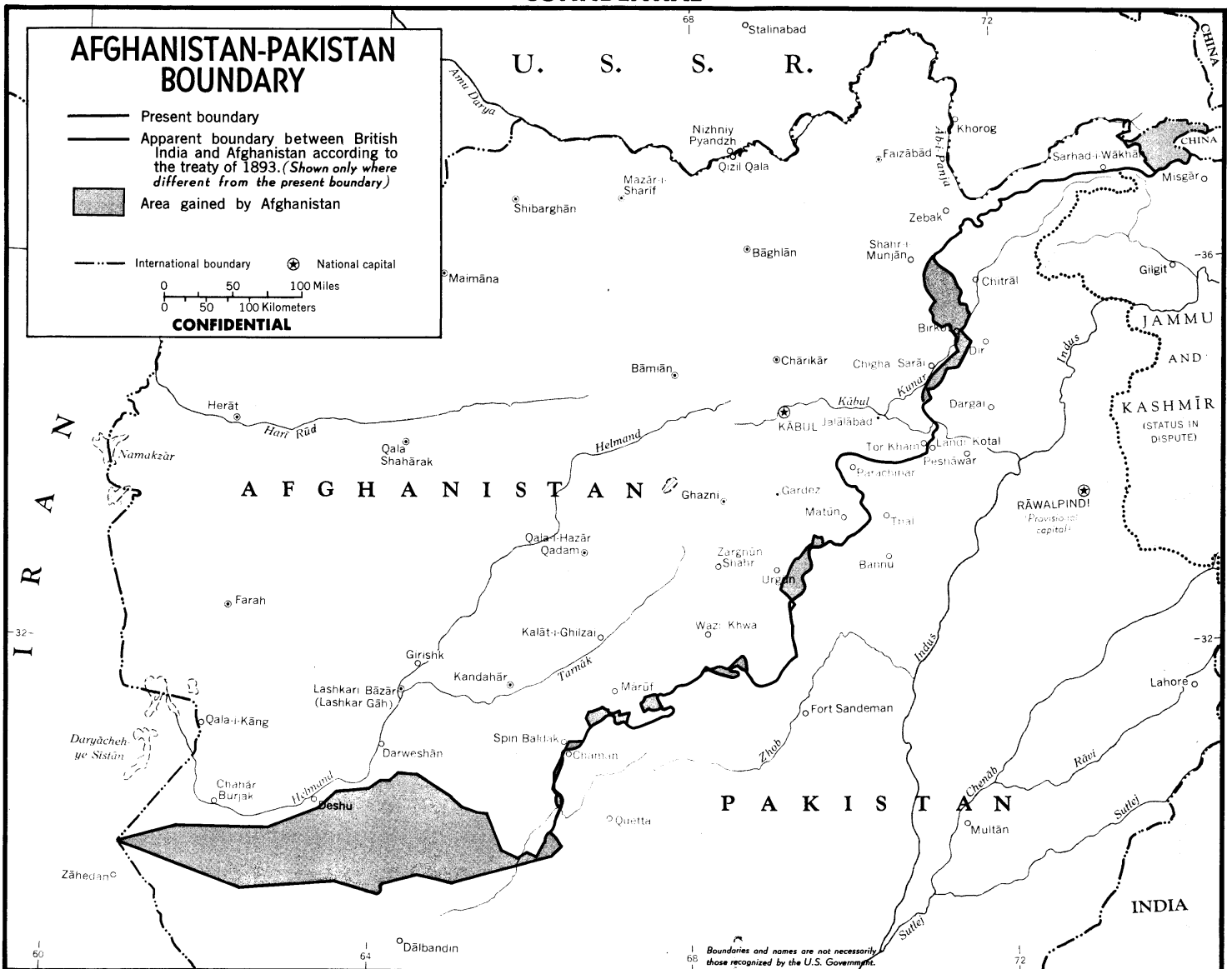
An examination of the Durand maps, however, has raised a question. The southern boundary of the Wakhan has apparently never been delimited east of the red line shown on the attached map. The final agreement extending the Afghan - Russian boundary east of Lake Victoria did not occur until 1895, two years after the Kabul Agreement and after the completion of the attendant field surveys. To date, no trace of an agreement has been found for the extension of the Afghan boundary to the China tripoint.

1/ London Despatch 3206, April 22, 1960, "Transmittal of Maps attached to British treaties with Afghanistan of 1893 and 1921." CONFIDENTIAL

2/ The 19th century boundary was modified in 1919-21 and again in 1932. These changes were very slight and are barely discernible at the scale of the attached map.

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