

advocating the partition of Afghanistan, should a favourable opportunity be offered, or even its complete conquest. Practically, of course, they had to be content with far less than this, and their policy was not altogether unfairly described at the time as 'locating expensive bodies of troops in dangerous localities beyond our frontier for the purpose of guarding against an enemy who is still separated from us by sixty-six miles of desert and mountain'. Lawrence's policy was to leave the tribes their independence and endeavour to win their esteem; in relation to Afghanistan he advocated 'friendship towards the actual rulers combined with rigid abstention from interference in domestic feuds'. There can be little doubt that on the whole his policy was wise and provident. It acted well, with such slight modifications as the course of events required, till 1878. Lord Lytton's reversal of it proved disastrous in every way, and after 1881 we practically returned to it till 1919, for although we guaranteed the inviolability of Afghanistan as a buffer state, we scrupulously abstained from all interference in Afghan internal affairs.

To consider Lawrence's policy a little more in detail. Dost Muhammad, the strong and able ruler, whose career, so far as it brought him into relation with British India, has been already related, died in 1863. A fierce struggle for the right to succeed him at once broke out between the most prominent of his sixteen sons. Sher Ali, the favourite of Dost Muhammad himself, maintained his position on the throne for about three years with great difficulty, and was then driven by his half-brother Afzal successively from Kabul in 1866 and from Kandahar in 1867 to take refuge in Herat his last stronghold. Afzal, however, died in October 1867, and his eldest son Abdur Rahman waiving his claims, he was succeeded by another brother Azim. In April 1868 Yakub Khan, Sher Ali's son, recaptured Kandahar, and Sher Ali himself, occupying Kabul in September, thus