

advocated by the Government of India, but perhaps supplementing them from a different angle—the following appear to me to be of primary importance:—

- (1.) The necessity of convincing the Afghan Government that Great Britain has no designs on the external independence of Afghanistan, and no wish to impede her internal development.

The first step, in my opinion, towards the attainment of this object should be the prompt and scrupulous fulfilment of all treaty obligations to Afghanistan. His Majesty's Government can, indeed, afford to regard the Ameer's first essay in international diplomacy with an indulgent eye. Direct relations with other Powers will soon cease to exercise the lure of the unknown, and when the Afghan Government realise that their country is regarded by other European nations merely as a field for commercial and political exploitation in their own interests, disillusionment should quickly follow. When this stage is reached, if Great Britain has meanwhile convinced Afghanistan of her good faith and goodwill, it should not be long before the ultimate identity of British and Afghan interests is made apparent.

- (2.) The avoidance of any steps which might cause the Ameer to fancy that His Majesty's Government are courting his friendship, or are haunted by a fear of his hostility. I have seen nothing to make me believe that the Afghan is an exception to the rule that Orientals regard the bestowal of unsolicited favours as a sign of weakness, but react readily to the stimulus of assumed indifference. While, then, I would recommend that reasonable assistance in the development of Afghanistan, even beyond the obligations of the treaty, should be freely given, I regard it as essential that such assistance should only be granted on the preferment of a personal request by the Ameer or of an official application by the Afghan Government.

- (3.) A definite and consistent policy on the north-west frontier of India. Although, as I have attempted to show, it would be Utopian to expect, at present, a public renunciation by the Ameer of his connection with the tribes beyond his frontier, any attempt on his part to dictate British policy in that region should be firmly resisted, even if the immediate result should be the renewal of Afghan intrigue among the tribes. Abandonment, for instance, in deference to the Ameer's protests, of the Khyber Railway, or of any approved line of policy in Waziristan, would entail such loss of British prestige in this country as would ultimately outweigh any immediate gain that might be in prospect. The consolidation of the British frontier appears to me to be the only means by which foreign influence within the Durand line can be permanently neutralised, and there is reason to hope that, when convinced by experience of the goodwill entertained by His Majesty's Government for Afghanistan, the Ameer may be reconciled to the loss of his favourite weapon by a realisation that it is no longer needed.

8. The decay of Afghan authority among the frontier tribes would remove one of the three main obstacles to the predominance of British influence in Afghanistan. The two remaining are the Bolshevik menace, with the diplomatic leverage which it places in the hands of the Ameer, and the question of the Turkish peace terms. The settlement of these problems must, however, be guided by considerations which it is not within my competence to estimate.

9. I am aware that a policy of the kind I have indicated invites criticism as lacking in ambition and initiative; it aims at a gradual progress towards a distant goal and relies on patience rather than pressure to achieve its purpose. But the position to-day, as I see it, emphasises the necessity of hastening slowly. The ground must first be prepared and a mass of suspicion and inherited distrust remains to be removed before the Afghan can bring himself to place confidence in the motives of British statesmen. His doubts are being fostered and exploited by the enemies of Great Britain, but, in existing circumstances, I believe it will be wise to allow him, provided that British interests are not clearly endangered, to make his own choice without ostentatious prompting, and to leave him to learn in the school of experience where his true profit lies.

The Ameer and his advisers are young men impatient of their rights and fanatically sensitive on the subject of their independence, which they are eager to advertise to the world at large. But the essential dependence of their country on the British Empire