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"The Mad and Criminal Projects of the Political": The Political Control of Afghanistan Surrounding Major-General William Keith Elphinstone's Command of the Kabul Garrison

Andrew Kelly

Throughout much of the 19th century, Britain and Russia remained in a political deadlock over much of Central Asia. Russia's encroachment in India threatened Britain's land claims in the country, their "Jewel in the Crown." To protect India, the government of the East India Company mounted an attempt to set up alliances with tribal leaders in order to make a "buffer zone" against the Russians. One of these zones was Afghanistan. Control of this rocky and mountainous land proved difficult for the British handle on three separate occasions.¹ During the first expedition, the British saw one of the worst disasters in military history. The garrison stationed in Kabul under the command of Major-General William Keith Elphinstone witnessed riots and rebellion that eventually forced what remained of the garrison to retreat from the city. The retreat led to the loss of 4,500 British soldiers and 12,000 camp followers.² As the chief commanding officer, Elphinstone received blame for these catastrophic losses. He assumed command as an old and sickly man who did not want to be in India or Afghanistan. In spite of these circumstances, the Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland, gave Elphinstone the command of the garrison. Though he was not the only option for the command, many other experienced officers were passed upon because they were critical of the government and harsh towards their military superiors. Lord Auckland and his political advisors, specifically Sir William MacNaghten, were largely responsible for Elphinstone's promotion. The improper political conduct among Auckland and his "politicals" supported Elphinstone's command of the Kabul garrison in order to keep control of Kabul in the hands of the British government.³

The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) is not a widely discussed topic among historians. "Then arises the question who is to blame in all of this? But let the British nation be so far just as to suspend their judgment on their late unfortunate General (Elphinstone) until every inquiry can be made . . ." ⁴ To most, it was just another war that meant little in terms of world history, the colonial age, or the British Empire itself. However, most of the scholarly studies of the First Anglo-Afghan War dedicate significant effort to "Elphinstone's Blunder." Academia is not the only realm in which Elphinstone's failures are discussed; pop culture took note as well. In the novel *Flashman*, George MacDonald Fraser called Elphinstone the biggest military idiot. "I state unhesitatingly, that for pure vacillating stupidity, for superb incompetence to command, for ignorance combined with bad judgment – in short, for the true talent for catastrophe – Elphy Bey stood alone. Others abide our question, but Elphy outshines them all as the greatest military idiot of our own or any other day."⁵ This was a dramatic criticism of Elphinstone's decisions during the war. Elphinstone's story was told with harsh criticism, and most historians put little effort into seeing how he successfully received command of the Kabul garrison.

The first definitive account on the Anglo-Afghan War came years after, in 1851, by John William Kaye in *History of the War in Afghanistan*.⁶ Kaye had served in the army from 1832 to 1841 in the Bengal Artillery, when he left the

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army and pursued civil service in the East India Company.⁷ As a member of the army before and during the Anglo-Afghan War, Kaye provided a detailed three-volume account of the war. His volumes are cited throughout all subsequent works about the war. His work was laden with British sources and correspondences from the start to the end of the war. However, what Kaye brought in sources, he lacked in analysis. The volumes provided accurate timelines of events and struggles during the war, but failed to interpret them, leaving such analysis open to the reader. While Kaye alluded to the political undertones of the war, he did not bring them to the surface of his work. The second volume, which featured Elphinstone, was heavily accented with sources describing the decision making of the politicals. Although Kaye's work was a wonderful outline from someone who experienced the war, it ultimately lacked analysis.

Historical analyses on the First Anglo-Afghan War are not the only readings to take note of Elphinstone's failures. Books on military failures often use Elphinstone as an example. In *Arrogant Armies: Great Military Disasters and the Generals Behind Them*, James M. Perry argued that Elphinstone was a man unfit for active military duty. Perry pointed to Elphinstone's health and "warm-hearted" nature as reasons against his candidacy for the Kabul garrison. However, this was the extent of Perry's analysis regarding Elphinstone.⁸ Perry exemplified what most people thought of Elphinstone's situation: it was a bad idea to give a terribly sick man command of a garrison. Perry did little research. In his chapter on Elphinstone he described the riots in Kabul and the subsequent retreat that occurred in late 1841 and early 1842. In this case, Perry, being a political writer, failed to acknowledge the political situations surrounding the war.⁹ The political undertones of the war were hinted at in various primary source materials surrounding Elphinstone. Perry's book was barely academic, but provided a major stepping stone for research on Elphinstone. Perry mirrored most scholars by viewing the Kabul insurrection and retreat to Jalalabad as blunders of Elphinstone's command. He was not the only one to ask why this man was put in charge. Perry presents questions but does not provide any answers.

Oxford University's military history publisher, Osprey, came out with a short version of the history of the British ventures in Afghanistan titled *The Afghan Wars, 1839-1919* by Gregory Fremont-Barnes. He is a military historian and senior lecturer at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.¹⁰ In this reader, he hinted at the political overshadowing of the war. He described Elphinstone as "a mere figurehead appointed by Auckland as a cipher likely to carry out Macnaghten's decisions without question."¹¹ This provided the best explanation for Elphinstone's promotion. However, Barnes did not elaborate any further. While Barnes was more narrowed than most writers on the subject, his explanation left readers with questions.

Edmund Yorke's *Playing the Great Game: Britain, War and Politics in Afghanistan Since 1836* was a long analysis of the British conflicts in Afghanistan continuing until the present-day.¹² This work dove into the political corruption of Elphinstone's blunder. However, the analysis only considered who was to blame for the disaster. It did not take into account the political situation before the retreat or Elphinstone's promotion. Yorke understood that the excessive political interference was at the root of the British problems in the region but never related it back to Elphinstone. Yorke provided a great starting point for this thesis, but failed to answer why Elphinstone was placed in command at Kabul.

William Dalrymple's *Return of a King: the Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42*, provided an updated account of the Anglo-Afghan War. He traced the war from its roots in Russian expansion to the end of the war.¹³ Dalrymple's detailed account of the events throughout the war was unique. While most historians tell the tale of the disaster and the war through British sources, Dalrymple infused the British material with Afghan and Indian sources as well. His retelling of the war provided flavor for the common reader. His knowledge of most material and integration of

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his time in the region was helpful in making a heavily detailed narrative.¹⁴ However, in regard to this thesis, Dalrymple's work provided only an elaborate timeline for the events. It did an excellent job placing and detailing events and people; however, Dalrymple failed to provide explanation or insight of the material, especially on Elphinstone's promotion or any political mishandling. He showed how others thought of Elphinstone and the political situation. He provided good opinion to many different decisions throughout the war. This does not take away from Dalrymple's beautifully written masterpiece. The broad scope of these works is why Elphinstone's promotion is so often glanced over. The works do not try to answer the question why was Elphinstone put in command. Yet, all make controversy out of why the sick, irritable, and aging Elphinstone was put in charge of such a key post. For all the commotion about in Elphinstone's command scholars did not analyze why Elphinstone was promoted.

The framework of this thesis is important to address. Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* argued that the military was subservient to the state and that policy directed war. It was the natural order that the state expanded its influence, and the military had to work for the will of the state. The state only granted the military autonomy in times of war.¹⁵ Clausewitz's work remained dormant for years until after World War II. The large growth in militarism in the first half of the twentieth century led to greater analysis of the roles of the civil sphere and military sphere and how they responded to each other. Most agreed they were two separate spheres. The nature of their interaction or how the civil sphere should maintain control of the military became important questions. Many theories branched off of Clausewitz's idea. However, after the dialogue of different theoretical standpoints, most agreed the objective civilian control should keep the military at bay. The overarching theme of *On War* was how much say the civilian government should have in military matters.

Samuel Huntington further described civil-military relationships. While Clausewitz was at the forefront of the military sphere becoming professional, Huntington was over a hundred years after. At the basis of his argument, his answer to the relationship was objective civilian control as opposed to subjective military control. This theory, known as subjective control, argued that in order to minimize military power, the power of civilian groups needed to increase. However, the large number of varied characters, groups, and ideals made it impossible to maximize civilian power over the military. Objective control, on the other hand, argued for the maximization of military professionalism and against the civilianization of military personnel. It was important to keep the two spheres separate and asserted that the military should be a tool of the state, one not involved in politics. Huntington noted "the essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is the denial of an independent military sphere."¹⁶

On November 2nd 1841 the reckoning thundered down upon those who stood oblivious. The rebels had already stormed in the day prior. The first target sought out by the mob of angry Afghans was none other than Sir Alexander Burnes; insurgent organizers "hated Burnes as the man universally believed to have guided the British into Afghanistan."¹⁷ Warned days before the mob arrived at his doorstep, Burnes set the warning aside until his final moments. Several accounts of the assault on Burnes' sanctuary still survive; the most famous is that of Sir John Kaye. With his home consumed by flames, a savior came to escort Burnes from the mob and to safety.¹⁸ Burnes and several others followed their guide to the garden where they hoped to escape, but a few feet into the garden the savior turned traitor and rendered Burnes' hopes of salvation fruitless.¹⁹ The mob angrily turned on Burnes, who frantically pleaded with them to spare his life; however, this attempt was futile. "On this he opened up his black neckcloth and tied it on his eyes, that he should not see from what direction the blow of death strikes him. Having done this, he stepped out the door and in one minute he was cut to pieces by the furious mob."²⁰

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Located across from Burnes' burning abode was the treasury house handled by Captain Hugh Johnson. As Shah Shuja's paymaster, Johnson spent the night in the cantonment and avoided the attack on the treasury house.²¹ However, Captain Trevor and a tiny guard regiment were left to protect the treasury house. As reports of chaos and destruction reached the cantonment, Johnson questioned why no orders were made in reaction to the events. He readied his horse to go check on his beloved treasury. Reports came in of Afghans flooding the street in front of the treasury, more arriving each passing minute. "Some of them were trying to break open my gate, and my Treasury guard was keeping up heavy fire upon them."²² While the city became overrun with rebels, Johnson watched from the ramparts of the cantonments only to see the smoke get thicker and thicker. The anemic Elphinstone attempted to lead a detachment to help, but fell off his horse, which exacerbated his already feeble state.²³ After hours passed, Elphinstone's aid came too late; Johnson received word that the rebels mined through his house and slaughtered everyone inside – men, women, and children. The treasury was looted as well.

Over the next forty-eight hours, the rebels' numbers swelled from the 300 to 3,000. Between the city and the cantonment laid a series of forts and storehouses, which became their next targets. These targets contained a bulk of the British supplies, and if the Afghan rebels captured them the British would be flushed out of their holdings within days and the rebels knew this all too well. Two days after Burnes' death, the rebels outflanked the British and seized control of the commissariat, the storehouse that contained the whole of the army's supplies. When the fort, under Mohammed Sharif's command, adjacent to the commissariat, fell into rebel hands, Ensign Warren and the approximately 100 men of the 5th Native Infantry who guarded the commissariat requested assistance and threatened to abandon the fort, but Elphinstone, his council, and MacNaghten remained paralyzed. Elphinstone gave the original order to not send relief to the commissariat, but suddenly changed his mind and two belated attempts proved to be catastrophic. That evening Mohammed Sharif's fort was lost. "The enemy then took immediate possession, depriving us of our only means of subsistence . . . it gave both confidence and much plunder to the enemy, and created great disgust among the Europeans, who lost all their rum; a worse loss was all the medical stores, sago, arrow-root, win, &c., for the sick."²⁴ Elphinstone, his senior military staff, and MacNaghten debated feverishly for hours on their next course of action. The final decision was to delay a counterassault until morning. In the morning, when the 44th Foot stormed the gates of the commissariat for relief, British fears were soon realized as Ensign Warren had already fled.

With the commissariat under rebel control, British morale diminished and rebel confidence soared. The following days saw repeated failure to capture the commissariat. Elphinstone's leadership proved to be inefficient and redundant in thought, and at times reached farcical magnitudes. "The poor general's mind is distracted by the diversity of opinions offered; and the great bodily ailments he sustains are daily enfeebling the powers of his mind."²⁵ The enemy rained fire upon the cantonment walls; however, Elphinstone ordered the troops stationed on the walls to not return fire, as there was a shortage of gunpowder.²⁶ On November 7th Elphinstone involved himself in a frivolous discussion over whether or not the trees next to the commissariat were planted parallel to the fort's walls or not.²⁷ "Neither could he be made to understand that it was the custom of the country to plant the trees in lines parallel with the outer walls; neither could he comprehend, that if even a tree intervened, a shot would destroy it from the heavy nine-pounders."²⁸ With little provisions, MacNaghten and Johnson secured future supplies by bribing leaders of the nearby town of Bemaru.²⁹

With failure abounding, MacNaghten was desperate for a boost. Elphinstone suffered from gout and, after repeated defeats, went into a deep depression. MacNaughten relieved Elphinstone of command and placed leadership in the hands of Brigadier Shelton, but he was almost as passive as Elphinstone. For a brief moment, Shelton embraced the leadership opportunity surging British morale. On November 10th he along with the 44th and

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37th Foot, as well as 6th Shah's Infantry, took force against the enemy-occupied Rikabashi Fort. Lady Sale noted "the onset was fearful. They looked like a great cluster of bees, but we beat them and drove them up again."³⁰ The bold move paid dividends, but the victory proved to be exorbitant, with almost 200 casualties along with three dead officers.³¹ Despite the losses, the British troops gained hope and Shelton "excited much astonishment that the men of the 44th were all inquiring after the 'little brig,' as they call him."³²

Provisions, men, morale, and insight were demonstrated to be among the largest shortages the British faced. The command structure became increasingly divided along factional lines, as lower ranked officers undermined the traditional hierarchy. With his new command, Shelton realized how deep the logistical shortcomings were and proposed the British retreat to Jalalabad. The bed-ridden Elphinstone concurred, but the rare shared opinion of the leading military officers was nullified by MacNaghten, "the general asked the envoy if he was prepared to retreat to Jalalabad as of tonight; but Sir William replied that he would do his duty, and never desert the king; and, if the army left him, [he] would die at his post!"³³ The leadership remained divided into two camps: fight or flight. The politicals in Kabul proved to be the dominant decision makers, even when choices lay outside their area of expertise.³⁴ One last attempt to break Afghan forces occurred on November 13th. Captain Andrew and the 5th Calvary managed to temporarily break enemy lines, but they returned in disarray. The outcome of this event proved inconclusive, as the short-term gain had possibly broken the morale of the insurrection. This only added to the long list of blunders throughout the insurrection.³⁵

Days passed with no major drawbacks. Livid debates continued on the best course of action, either side refusing to compromise. Weeks after the insurrection, officers ignored their essential duties, and even civilians began to take part in the decision-making process. Many bystanders, particularly Lady Sale, took note as "grand dissension in military councils. High and very plain language has been this day used by Brigadier Shelton to General Elphinstone; and people do not hesitate to say that our chief shall be set aside – a mode of proceedings recommended a fortnight ago by Mr Baness, the merchant."³⁶ However, rebels forced their hand by threatening supply lines MacNaghten had secured in the town of Bamaru. With Shelton's opposition, British forces led a silent attack to try to dislodge Afghan holdings in the hills around the cantonment and in Bamaru. On November 23rd, 1,350 British troops silently marched in attempt to remove the rebels from the hills and Bamaru.³⁷ However, it was fruitless; the rebels awoke and were able to rain grapeshot down upon the troops. The British troops were left exposed trying to scale the hillside, with all hope vaporized as the assault failed and disintegrated. The final offensive was lost, a valid bid clearly laced with tactical nightmares, the blame for which allegedly belonging to Shelton. The day was lost, 300 men killed while the wounded left behind were gutted as their wives and children watched from the cantonment below.³⁸ This was the final blow to the drained forces of the British garrison.

The month that followed the Battle of Bamaru remained vacant of conflict. Throughout the entire insurrection, MacNaghten feverishly tried to secure alliances and peace with the rebel leaders, all kept in secrecy from the military chain of command. "The politicals are again very mysterious, and deny that any negotiations are going on . . . but letters come in constantly, and we know they are treating with the Ghilzyes."³⁹ He tried to "divide and conquer" and to create dialogue between the leaders of the rebellion. "Sir William has given one of the Kuzilbash chiefs 50,000 rupees to raise a diversion in our favour and has promised him two lakhs more if he succeeds."⁴⁰ MacNaghten's previous success with this strategy during the initial expedition into Afghanistan compromised the current situation, and little came of it. After a minor triumph on the 13th, MacNaghten, either consciously or by pressure, changed his strategy to assassinate selected rebel chiefs.⁴¹ Throughout his secret negotiations, the rebel leaders were infuriated because the British kept attacking them when they wanted peace in the negotiations. On December 11th MacNaghten met with rebel chiefs who imposed new demands on the British. The Afghans wanted

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the British out, and fast. The proposal consisted of unmolested withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan (not just Kabul), as well as a secure supply of food and transportation for the British. The former Afghan leader, Dost Mohammed, was to be returned and Shah Shuja could either stay in Kabul or leave with the British. Finally, the British were to never set foot in Afghanistan again, unless summoned by the Afghan government. Further surprise attacks on occupied forts around the cantonment proved devastating. Even camp followers tried to take matters into their own hands by taking British arms.⁴² With the garrison starved and morale weakened, MacNaghten had no more leverage to play games.

MacNaghten proceeded with more frantic negotiations. On December 22nd an intermediary for Akbar Khan presented MacNaghten with a deal from Akbar to present the head of a rebel chief to MacNaghten. In turn, MacNaghten would be the minister to Shah Shuja, who would remain in power, and the British were allowed to return to the Bala Hissar fort until the snow cleared enough for them to retreat in the spring. MacNaghten's eagerness to accept the deal sealed his fate along with the garrison's. MacNaghten fell for the deception, meeting with the rebel leaders the next day. Signs of deception among the Afghan leaders became ominous and MacNaghten was advised not to meet with the rebels as most of the British leaders decided on an open retreat to Jalalabad. MacNaghten claimed he had knowledge of the possible dangers, but to him the benefits outweighed the risks. "Dangerous it is; but if it succeeds, it is worth all risks: the rebels have not fulfilled even one article of the treaty, and I have no confidence in them and if by it we can only save our honour, all will be well; at any rate I would rather suffer a hundred deaths than live the last six weeks over again."⁴³ The Envoy continued with the meeting. Elphinstone was supposed to provide an escort but they failed to show, making MacNaghten even more anxious. Upon arrival, Akbar Khan was present with several rebel chiefs, most of whom severely hated MacNaghten. Suspicion among his entourage grew as MacNaghten sat down and his assistant, Captain George Lawrence, was forced to a knee by another leader. As Lawrence recalled, "I stood behind Sir William till, pressed by Dost Muhammad Khan, I knelt to one knee, having first called the Envoy's attention to the number of Afghans around us, saying that if the subject of the conference was of that secret nature I believed it to be, they had better be removed."⁴⁴ Lawrence noticed the quick ascent upon MacNaghten and elaborated, "I turned and saw the Envoy, lying where his heels had been and his hand locked in Muhammed Akbar's, consternation and horror depicted in his countenance."⁴⁵ MacNaghten was dragged down the hillside screaming "Az barai Khuda (for God's sake)."⁴⁶ With his fate sealed, MacNaghten was decapitated, his body butchered into pieces, and bits of his corpse paraded around the city. Further stipulations were added to the treaty, as the British were to retreat and leave all but six guns and to give their "treasure" to the rebel leaders.⁴⁷

As news of the Envoy's death reached the cantonments, Elphinstone and senior officers frantically tried to secure a clear and safe retreat from Kabul, at any cost. A stressful Christmas drew on the survivors, as Eyre states, "A more cheerless Christmas-day perhaps never dawned upon British soldiers in a strange land; and the few whom the force of habit urged to exchange the customary greetings of the season, did so with countenances and in tones indicative of anything but merriment."⁴⁸ Elphinstone remained in constant meetings with his staff. One officer pushed for a last ditch military assault on the rebels. Others suggested even bolder plans, but the council decided to adhere to the treaty, as the time for action had passed. Akbar Khan promised an escort along with food, but when the retreat materialized for the British, the escort failed to show. With failed preparations and constant delays, the wretched Afghan winter had already set in; snow piled as high as four feet in some places. Lady Sale procured some books for an Afghan friend to keep safe; she came upon a passage from "Campbell's Poems": "Few, shall part where many meet/The snow shall be their winding sheet/And every turf beneath their feet/Should be a soldier's sepulchre."⁴⁹ Three columns of the retreat consisted of 4,500 soldiers and 12,000 followers with most of the combat units leading the way.⁵⁰ The frigid temperatures combined with the starved soldiers and followers created a slow death

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march. Many sepoy units fled back to Kabul with frostbite. The cold, starved conditions were not the only deterrent from the march forward, many "Sepoys and camp-followers lined the way, having sat down in despair to perish in the snow."⁵¹ On the second night, Afghans began lining the mountain passes to rain fire upon the columns, becoming a fixture for the rest of the retreat.⁵²

The next morning, the Afghans gathered at the tail end of the severely dwindled camps.⁵³ Negotiations were once again made for a safe continuation of the retreat. Akbar Khan promised to remove the Afghans that waited in the passes ahead. The ruse that Akbar Khan planned now violently appears and the Afghans showered more gunfire upon the British. By the fourth day, many had deserted back to Kabul, but most likely they killed on their way back. Akbar Khan promised the safety of women, children, and any wounded officers who surrendered. By this point, Elphinstone ceased to give any orders, and rode melancholy on his horse. Once again, Akbar Khan promised to grant safe passage to those who continued if Shelton and Elphinstone gave themselves as hostages. Elphinstone would die months later in captivity. By January 12th, the almost 16,000 withered to 2,200. Most of the British died from the cold winter temperatures or were killed while fleeing back to Kabul.⁵⁴ The troops were now left under the command of Brigadier Thomas Anquetil. The surrounding slopes were flooded with Afghan troops and the British mounted a desperate attack, refusing to surrender. The result was slaughter. On January 13th, assistant Surgeon William Brydon arrived in Jalalabad in terrible condition with part of his skull missing. "The terrible wailing sound of those bugles I shall never forget. It was a dirge for our slaughtered soldiers, and, heard all through the night, it had an inexpressibly mournful and depressing effect. Dr. Brydon's tale struck horror into the hearts of all who heard it."⁵⁵ Brydon's pony lay down in the stable and never got up.⁵⁶

In 1782, William George Keith Elphinstone was born, the third son of the Honorable William Fullerton Elphinstone and his wife Elizabeth Fullerton. Elphinstone received a liberal education, like his brothers before him, which included English college training. Soon after Elphinstone made his career choice and he enlisted in the army as the Europe bubbled with revolution.⁵⁷ Elphinstone spent significant time in Spain in 1808 and later in the West Indies. He quickly climbed the military ranks with the help of his brother Charles; he was able to purchase a majority of a command.⁵⁸ In 1814, Elphinstone returned to London after suffering a wound in the storming of Bergen-op-Zoom. He received many letters in support of his welfare, but he soon returned to action. By 1815, Elphinstone obtained the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and took command of the 33rd Foot for the Battle of Waterloo. In this memorable engagement, Elphinstone reached the peak of his military career. A series of casualties to commanding officers enabled Elphinstone to lead the entire 5th Brigade in the advancement of the British Army against Napoleon's cavalry. The sight of Elphinstone's men being slain by Napoleon's legions gave way for Elphinstone to rally his men, "Come on, my brave fellows, let us die like Britons, sword in hand, or conquer!"⁵⁹

In light of his success at Waterloo and further engagements against the French, Elphinstone received Companion of the Bath, part of the Order of the Bath for Britain. Other allies took note of Elphinstone's bravery; the Netherlands and Russia both knighted him in the Order of William and Order of St. Anna, respectively. However, recognition for those who participated in the liberation of the continent was commonplace.⁶⁰ Elphinstone would leave active military service after his promotion to Colonel in 1825. Elphinstone's military record showed an able, charismatic man eager to fight for his country. His enthusiasm remained part of the military tradition of the Elphinstone family. Elphinstone had a brilliant military career. Knighted in multiple countries and given Companion of the Bath in England, he displayed genius in the Battle of Waterloo and other Napoleonic War engagements. In light of his career, Elphinstone seemed to have the ability to carry out an effective command when he reached Afghanistan. However, the excessive amount of time between military services, almost twenty-five years, took a toll on his abilities and mindset.

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After years of half pay, Elphinstone came out of semi-retirement to erase his growing debts. Elphinstone did not wish to be in India,

He hates being here, and is in all the first struggles of 'a real ancient Briton.' (Don't you remember how you and I were 'ancient Britons' always when we fell into foreign society?) He is wretched because nobody understands his London topics, or knows his London people, and he revels in a long letter from Lord W. He thought G.[Auckland] very much altered since he had seen him, and G. thought very much the same of him.⁶¹

The once charismatic lieutenant-colonel had now been reduced to a bitter old man, who was placed in an area outside of his comfort. Elphinstone did not want to entangle himself with "negroes" (Indian Sepoys) and thought political handlings in Afghanistan were repulsive and unprofessional, stating:

My command I do not think enviable. It is one of expense, responsibility, and anxiety . . . There are not many officers to give me much advice, most of the like myself having only lately come into this country. The Political Agents, generally young officers, are frequently proposing schemes for the execution of which they are not responsible. . .

[MacNaghten] is cold and reserved, but I believe very clever . . . Shah Shuja I saw two days ago, a stout, careworn-looking man. He received me in a wretched garden, his house appeared bad and uncomfortable, as indeed are most here - no one except Sir W. M. [MacNaghten] possesses much more than a mud hut. The King [Shah Shuja] leaves this on the 10th when I am expected to go too, which is rather annoying as I intended marching by myself and his ragamuffin retinue will be a great nuisance on the road.⁶²

One of the criticisms Elphinstone received was that he relied heavily upon his advisors. In Afghanistan and India, he remained in constant conflict with those who offered help. Despite this fact, Elphinstone's "advisors" in Afghanistan had just as much experience as he did in Afghanistan. These two factors should have been deterrents from any sort of leadership role, especially an unfamiliar role.

The most applied excuse as to why Major-General Elphinstone should not have been promoted to lead the Kabul Garrison remains his health. Emily Eden, an old family friend, did not recognize him in their encounter in early 1840. In 1840, Governor George Auckland and his sister, Emily Eden, ran into Major-General Elphinstone on their way back to Calcutta. The Scottish families had been close friends. Emily did not recognize Elphinstone at first: "I recollect him so well with the F.s and G.s as 'Elphy Bey,' and never had made out it was the same man till a sudden recollection came over me a week ago."⁶³ Elphinstone, nearly sixty years old at this point, was riddled with a severe case of gout: "He was in a shocking state of gout, poor man!"⁶⁴ Major-General William Nott took notice of Elphinstone when word of his promotion spread throughout the ranks, "he [Elphinstone] had held commissions in the Guards, and was one of the most gentleman-like of the members of the household brigade; but he had no experience of service; he lacked health and strength and infirmity brought with it its usual concomitants, indolence and feebleness of purpose."⁶⁵

Elphinstone's condition progressively worsened over the next year. After the long trek from India, he arrived in Kabul in April 1841. In July the same year, Dr. Campbell, Elphinstone's surgeon, had inspected his patient and been shocked by Elphinstone's condition. Campbell wrote,

Genl. Elphinstone has been very seriously ill ever since his arrival here. His malady attacked him in all his limbs, making a perfect wreck of him. I saw him a short time since & very much astonished I was at the very great alteration in his appearance. He is reduced to a perfect skeleton, both hands in flour and water, and legs swathed in flannel and in very low and desponding condition, totally incapable, I feel assured, of giving any attention to any affair howsoever important. I fear in my humble opinion his constitution is shattered beyond redemption.⁶⁶

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Elphinstone sent the report to Auckland and asked for relief from his post. Elphinstone was now finalizing his return home, but this would come too late as the Kabul Uprisings were beginning.

The Company leadership instructed Robert Sale to suppress Ghilzai forts and signs of uprisings on his way out of Afghanistan. Sale's Military Engineer, George Broadfoot, met with Elphinstone to discuss the collected intelligence on the Ghilzais. Broadfoot described the General "in a pitiable state of health, absolutely unfit for duty."⁶⁷ Broadfoot even questioned Elphinstone's sanity.

He insisted on getting up and was supported to his visitor's room. This exertion so exhausted him that it was half an hour before he could attend to business, indeed several ineffectual attempts to do so had exited him so much that I was sorry I have come at all . . . He said he did not know the number or strength of the [Ghilzai] forts [and] complained bitterly of the way he was deprived of all authority [by MacNaghten] and reduced to a cipher . . . [Later] I went back to the General and found him in bed quite worn out . . . He told me once more how he had been tormented by Macnaghten from the first; reduced, to his own words, from a General to a head constable. He asked me to see him before I moved, be he said, "if anything occurs, for God sake clear the passes quickly, that I may get away. For, if anything were to turn up I am unfit for it, done up body and mind, and I have told Lord Auckland so." This he repeated two or three times, adding he doubted very much he would ever see home, even if he did get away.⁶⁸

As the gout continued to affect Elphinstone others began to question his state of mind. Gout is a type of arthritis that can destroy bones, muscles, joints, cartilage and other connective tissues. This is caused by the crystallization of uric acid in the effected joint area. Because gout can have many causes, the origin of Elphinstone's remains unknown. Most likely dietary reasons were to blame, focusing on excessive consumption of red meat and alcohol. As the disease progresses it impedes or stops physical movements. Symptoms usually hit the feet first, swelling in the big toe with intense pain. If left untreated, gout could lead to impaired kidney function and kidney failure. Elphinstone's gout was located in his right wrist, feet, and both knees. If properly treated, gout was manageable. This was not the case for Elphinstone. His gout turned chronic and flare-ups were frequent. In his writings, he often switched to his left hand because of the pain in his right wrist, and his writing became more readable. With multiple joints affected, he faced attacks more often. This, in turn, kept him bed-ridden and out of action.⁶⁹

After his semi-retirement and subsequent growing debt, he reluctantly returned to active duty in unfamiliar lands. Auckland and his government should have seen Elphinstone's reluctance and inexperience in Afghanistan as the first signs that he was not fit for command. Accounts of his declining health add to the number of reasons Elphinstone should have remained away from the Afghanistan frontier and from any engagements on the Indian sub-continent. The blame associated with Elphinstone is partly misplaced, as

Major-General Elphinstone's memorandum of his time in Kabul offered an insight to how he and the "politicals" interacted with each other. Specifically, Elphinstone's memorandum described a struggle of conflict between himself and Sir William MacNaghten, the chief political officer for the British in Afghanistan. When Elphinstone took command of the Kabul garrison in late 1840, he had not seen action in almost twenty-five years. In late April, his gout flared up and this slowed his journey to the Afghan capital. This attack ceased in late May, but the gout returned on June 6th and kept him in bed until September.⁷⁰

Elphinstone was criticized for his incapacity to think independently and that he relied too heavily on his officers' advice. The judgment and foresight laid out in his memorandum portrayed a different kind of man, one capable of making effective military decisions on his own. When Elphinstone arrived in Kabul he took note of the cantonment where the British troops were located. Like many of his predecessors, he thought it was in a poor defensive position. He wrote to Lord Auckland to point out the deficiencies of the Kabul cantonment and went on to ask for

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another brigade if the suggestions for the cantonment were not met. Both requests were disregarded and MacNaghten, as the senior political agent, also refused to change the cantonment layout. The request for more troops was also rejected when Robert Sale's forces made their way back to India under the request of the East India Company government. Elphinstone thought extra forces were necessary to protect the cantonment because the extra brigade would be used to defend the poor layout of the cantonment while another would suppress any issues that arose in the city.⁷¹ Yet, the political agents running British India and Afghanistan rejected his suggestions. Back in India, Lord Auckland's government was lulled into a false sense of security by its political agents in Afghanistan. This misplaced confidence coupled with the increasing expenditures of the Afghan expedition led to a weakening of Elphinstone's forces. Most military men in Kabul knew that Elphinstone was correct in his assessments. However, Auckland and his agents refused to acknowledge the warnings of his military advisors. Instead listened to MacNaghten's claims that the country was safe, "The Envoy and the Minister [Alexander Burnes] deemed the country so tranquil that he wrote to the Government that the force deemed necessary would be no longer required."⁷² MacNaghten knew that the country grew restless. Military officers scattered across Afghanistan had warned him. Yet he refused to take their advice seriously.

In his memorandum, Elphinstone sensed how MacNaghten and his agents clouded his judgments. Around the time the insurrection, Elphinstone took part in conversations with MacNaghten about them. Elphinstone was worried that the insurrection would grow into something bigger, writing,

I had frequent conversations with the Envoy and with Sir A. Burnes, regarding the extent to which this disaffection might have spread, and was anxious in my enquiries as to the state of feeling in the city, they both assured me, particularly the latter, of their conviction that the disturbances were merely caused by some Ghilzies, and that the disaffection was not widely disseminated and did not extend to Cabool.⁷³

The control MacNaghten had over the Afghanistan situation was astonishing. His ability to downplay the impending insurrection helped block Elphinstone's ability to make accurate decisions. MacNaghten did not fear the disaffection of the locals. To him Afghanistan was tranquil and nothing could go wrong. Now Elphinstone had to make decisions on information from MacNaghten, a man who manipulated that information to his liking.

When the Kabul Insurrection started on November 2nd MacNaghten visited Elphinstone, in spite of the fact that Burnes had been murdered and the treasury plundered, writing that "The Envoy came and told me that it [Kabul] was in a state of insurrection but that he did not think much of it and that it would shortly subside."⁷⁴ MacNaghten viewed these events as minor, as clearly indicated by his continuing disconnect with Afghan reality. He persisted in involving himself in military operations, and he remained influential in war council meetings.⁷⁵ Even as events continued to worsen, MacNaghten insisted that Kabul must remain in the hands of the British, even though Elphinstone judged that it was time to leave the city. Elphinstone's memorandum described a dispatch he received, assigned to MacNaghten from Captain McGregor "announcing the march of reinforcements from India."⁷⁶ MacNaghten asked for reinforcements despite having persuaded the government to return all unnecessary forces back to India. Elphinstone had no knowledge of these orders until this letter arrived. MacNaghten denied Elphinstone's request for reinforcements which further undermined Elphinstone who foresaw the logistical problems.

The summer of 1841 brought further suffering to Elphinstone. He remained bedridden with gout, and his memorandum did not mention events during this period. When he somewhat recovered from his ailments, he asked for a leave, "having sent in a Medical Certificate and received leave to return to Hindoostan, I made arrangements to accompany Sir W. MacNaghten, when making over the command to the next officer."⁷⁷ Dr.

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Campbell, Elphinstone's physician, painted a grim picture of his fading health. He predicted that Elphinstone would not make it out of Afghanistan alive. However, Lord Auckland asked Elphinstone to stay in spite of his health.⁷⁸ Additionally Elphinstone's request came at a terrible time, when MacNaghten's envoy was supposed to leave, the insurrections started and this consumed MacNaghten and Elphinstone's time. One newspaper wrote, "no man is willing to retire at the first appearance of danger."⁷⁹ If he left, he risked being labeled as a coward. If he stayed, he faced criticisms for commanding an inadequate force of troops.

The final stroke of MacNaghten's arrogance was his continued negotiations with Afghan leaders, particularly Mohammed Akbar. When Elphinstone learned of MacNaghten's meeting with Akbar, he sensed treachery. However, MacNaghten told him, "leave it all to me, I understand these things better than you do."⁸⁰ This meeting ended in MacNaghten's death and further cemented Elphinstone's legacy as a failure. To many, MacNaghten's death showed Elphinstone's incompetence. The death of a "beloved" government official illuminated his inability to take control of the Insurrection, though he never had control. The way Elphinstone wrote his memorandum was laced with a tone that implied he never had control over the military in Kabul. MacNaghten and the politicals displayed the authority in military matters— layout of the cantonment, forces needed to secure the area, and strategic decisions. Only after MacNaghten's death were Elphinstone and his officers allowed to display his abilities, but by that time he was left with nothing and forced to take what the Afghans gave him and retreat from the city with the remaining British force. His command seemed to be more of a formality than a necessity. He was wary of the schemes the political agents conducted. Elphinstone thought the position was enviable. Elphinstone quickly recognized his situation but knew little of the political workings prior to his service.

When Sir Willoughby Cotton retired from the Afghan campaign, speculation surfaced as to who should replace Cotton in command. Public and military opinion favored Major-General Sir William Nott as his successor. Nott had been in the Company's army since 1800 and, unlike Elphinstone, favored his Indian troops. In spite of Nott's valuable experience in India and the surrounding countries, Auckland's government passed over him to serve as commander of the Kabul garrison. Nott proved to be an outspoken individual and was regarded as anything but a gentleman. On many occasions, he clashed with his superior officers and the Company's government, particularly Auckland's government. At the onslaught of the Afghan campaign, Nott pressed against his superior officer, Sir John Keane, in regards to the removal of several Sepoy regiments. Nott did not take too kindly to Keane's actions, "the truth is he is a Queen's officer, and I am a Company's, I am decidedly of the opinion that a Queen's officer, be he ever so talented, is totally unfit to command the Company's Army."⁸¹ The blows at his superiors only deteriorated Nott's integrity among commanding officers and Company politicals.

Upon Keane's arrival in Afghanistan, Nott learned that Keane passed him for promotion for another Queen's officer, General Willshire. After 40 years of being numbed to this experience, Nott became infuriated. Nott confronted Keane in his tent shortly after he heard the decision: "I see I am to be sacrificed because I happen to be senior to the Queen's officers," said Nott. "Ill impression Sir!" Keane replied. "You insult my authority. I will never forgive your conduct as long as I live!" "Your Excellency, since that is the case, I have only to wish you a very good evening."⁸² Nott's retaliation further crippled his ability for advancement; yet the only flaw Nott carried with him was his outspokenness. Time after time, his candidacy remained overlooked because of this one flaw. His abilities and experience as a military man never demolished his acidic language towards his superiors and Company politicals. However, the next time officials passed on Nott for promotion proved to be most fatal to the Company.

With Cotton out of Afghanistan, a new commander-in-chief needed to be appointed. Already in command of the Kandahar garrison, Nott showed to be the logical choice. He possessed invaluable experience and had an

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unmatched relationship with his sepoy troops, an attribute that many British officers lacked. Nott knew that in spite of all of his accolades, a Queen's officer would be in line with the promotion.⁸³ Nott added to the bitter impression he left with his superiors. In September 1840 Nott damned the actions of the Company rule in Afghanistan in a private letter. He wrote,

The authorities are never right, even by chance, and, although most of them are stupid in the extreme, they fancy themselves great men and even possessors of abilities and talents . . . They drink their claret, draw large salaries, go with a numerous rabble at their heels – all well paid by John Bull – the Calcutta treasury is drained of its rupees and goodnatured Lord Auckland approves and confirms all. In the meantime all goes wrong here. We are become hated by the people and the English name and character, which, two years ago, stood so high and fair, has become a bye-word. Thus it is to employ men selected by intrigue and patronage! The conduct of 10,001 politicals has ruined our cause and bared the throat of every European in this country to the sword and knife of the revengeful Affghan and bloody Belooch and, when several regiments be quickly sent, not a man will be left to note the fall of his comrades. Nothing but force will ever make them submit to the hated Shah Shooja who is most certainly as great a scoundrel as ever lived.⁸⁴

Nott later attempted a futile apology to appeal to officials.

It appears that a *private* [original emphasis] letter of mine, freely commenting on the proceeding of the Politicals in this country, was *kindly* sent to Government, and I am called upon to state my reason for having written it. I have done so in ten line, saying that it was a *private* letter, not intended to go further than the individual to whom it was addressed, and written under the impression of what was passing before me at the moment.⁸⁵

A couple days later, after Nott dispatched this letter to India, he saw the name of Major-General Elphinstone in the orders to command the British in Afghanistan.

When the British settled down in Afghanistan, before Elphinstone's promotion, the senior political agent in Afghanistan, Sir William MacNaghten, provided Company officials with a false sense of security. The false sense gave Auckland and his government the impression that Afghanistan was secure and did not require a strong military leader to control the region. However, those in the army knew all was not well. Nott knew of the situation with the Afghans, but since he remained out of favor with most of the Company's officials, MacNaghten's lullaby took a stronger hold. Even the newspapers back in India were under the illusion that everything was calm, writing,

Mr McNaghten and the officers of his mission with a small honorary escort were alone in attendance of the British force. On his Majesty's [Shah Shuja] entry in to the city there could not be less than between sixty and seventy thousand persons present. The balconies were crowded with women – the streets line with men – and from all quarters a universal shout of welcome was heard.⁸⁶

At the end of the Kabul Insurrection MacNaghten was slain and what was left of the British garrison marched out of the city. Through the chaos, Nott managed to keep his garrison in Kandahar, as did other commanders stationed throughout Afghanistan. When news of MacNaghten's death reached Nott, he scathingly blasted the Envoy, writing,

His end was like the rest of his proceedings from the day we entered the country. He ought *not* to have trusted those wretched half-savage people; but his system was always wrong. It has always appeared wonderful to me how Government could have employed so very weak a man. I fear his three years' doings be retrieved, and that our blood must flow for it.⁸⁷

Nott's reputation of being crude and condemning held him back from receiving promotions he thought he deserved. He was not the first or last commander to clash with the politicals. It was a harsh, wordy, and confrontational relationship. He best represented this dynamic between the military "command" and the political

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agents. If anything, the conflict fueled his desires for retribution, a campaign he would lead once the British regrouped after the Kabul Insurrection and Massacre.

The Company government ignored the calls of one of its most redoubtable officers in favor of the lullaby of its political agents. Auckland's decision to make Afghanistan a war zone transferred decision-making power to the military. Ultimately the final decision of each promotion remained in Auckland's hands. The want of political officers to dabble in what seemed to be military affairs showed a complete lack of confidence in the military, as embodied by Nott. The false sense of security British political agents provided to the Company government proved fatal for 12,000 men, women, and children in Kabul. The conflict between Nott and his superiors became a cautionary tale of what should not happen in a wartime situation. Governments cannot provide the insight in these situations that proven military personnel can provide, which Nott exemplified.

Before the insurrection in Kabul, MacNaghten's management came under scrutiny not just from military officers in India, but from England as well. The Duke of Wellington was a tough critic of MacNaghten. The Duke and the Envoy were in contact. MacNaghten complained of the injurious attacks upon his role in Afghanistan. The Duke blasted MacNaghten for appointing several Afghans to regulate important posts between Kabul and Gandamak, "who were the very men who were the leaders of the rebellion, in the attack, and the destruction and murder of the East India Company's officers and troops." The Duke continued his attack on MacNaghten, "No libels can state facts against the Afghan Government stronger than these." He brutally criticized the security policies in Afghanistan, where MacNaghten employed cut-rate and unstable Afghan warriors. "It will not do to raise pay and discipline matchlock men in order to protect the British troops and their communications, discovered by Mr MacNaghten to no longer be able to protect themselves."⁸⁸ MacNaghten was constricted by a short financial leash imposed by the Company Treasury, but this was only part of the reason for his policy failures. The money used for mercenaries could be used on better-equipped and reliable British soldiers. Wellington wrote,

We have carried on war in hill countries, as well in Hindostan and the Deccan as in the Spanish Peninsula; and I never heard that our troops were not equall, as well in personal activity as by their arms, to contend with and overcome any natives of hills whatever. Mr Macnaghten ought to have learnt by this time that hill countries are not conquered, and their inhabitants kept in subjection, solely by running up the hills and firing at long distances. The whole of a hill country of which it is necessary to keep possession, particularly for the communications of the army, should be occupied by sufficient bodies of troops, well supplied, and capable of maintaining themselves; and not only not a Ghilzye or insurgent should be able to run up and down hills, but not a cat or a goat, except under the fire of those occupying the hills. This is the mode of carrying on the war.⁸⁹

The Duke opened MacNaghten's position for criticisms. MacNaghten's mishandling of Afghanistan was now widely discussed in England.

News of the disaster eventually made its way to England. Reports of the horrors that occurred on the retreat to Jalalabad alarmed the English public. They blamed the man "in charge" of the military, Elphinstone. Much of this criticism was unjustly and hastily attributed to Elphinstone because of his unfortunate placement, a position he should not have been in. However, some came to his defense, such as Lieutenant-Colonel Pringle Taylor, who wrote,

For my part, as a British citizen, I cannot silently submit to this misdirection, at a critical moment, of the public judgment, nor can I, as a British officer, submit without protest to the crimination of an officer commanding an army which has been lost, not on a fair field, but sacrificed by diplomatic intrigue, I cannot without protest submit that he should be held responsible for this disaster, when the guilt of it must lie elsewhere.⁹⁰

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Being a military man himself, Taylor knew how intertwined politics and the military were in India. He could not idly stand by and watch the public question Elphinstone's command. Privately, people inquired about the matter, as one individual wrote, "Every one in private admits that there ought to be a solemn inquiry into this matter, and no one come publicly forward to declare that conviction . . . where evidently there is no other course to be pursued, whilst the public attention is led away to seek for a victim among the wretched remnant of a sacrificed army."⁹¹ The only way to clear Elphinstone's "undoubted fault" was to open the debate on a grand stage for the public to witness.

Details of the events in Afghanistan trickled in slowly. At first, the British government had no official record of the events; they only had private accounts to rely on. Nevertheless, Taylor defended Elphinstone, arguing that "the distribution of the cantonments was made before General Elphinstone assumed the command, it was made in spite of several military commanders who had preceded him, by Sir William M'Naghten, who desired to have the forces available for parade or defence close to the palace which he himself inhabited."⁹² Taylor suggested that those in control in Kabul must have been behind the failures. He insisted that MacNaghten had made most of the military decisions, usually against the military advice he had received. This idea was hinted at in Elphinstone's memorandum, but never directly stated.⁹³ The cantonments remained a focal point for Taylor. The fortification of the British troops helped drive away other officers and opened the position up for Elphinstone. Taylor commented "We know that another officer had thrown up the command in disgust, finding it impossible to take any measures either for the security of his force, or for the support of his own military character."⁹⁴ No militarily sound officer would have approved of layouts such as the ones designed by MacNaghten. Still, the matter of not having quality fortifications in Kabul drove away promising commanders.⁹⁵ The crucial deciding factor in Elphinstone's decision to take up the command of the garrison was his ignorance of the cantonments and of the comprehensive condition of the state of Afghanistan. Taylor further attacked the politicals on the layout of the cantonments. Most blamed Elphinstone for the faulty cantonment layout. However, Taylor pointed out that Elphinstone should not bear any blame for the cantonments, as he was not aware of their faults and he took no part in their design or construction. The blame for the cantonments was the responsibility of the person who designed them. Their purpose was to display the "might" of the British, not for the safety of the troops. The person to blame was the one with the true power, MacNaghten.

MacNaghten's control extended into making ill-advised campaign suggestions. He wanted to lay siege to the city of Herat and the monarch that ruled there. However, the tri-partite treaty stipulated that the king in Herat should remain in power, and Elphinstone and the other officers would not have it. Taylor applauded Elphinstone's efforts in thwarting some of MacNaghten's ridiculous suggestions. He "resisted, and even with effect, measures, if possible, more insane than any of those that had been already perpetrated; that it is to him we are indebted for the army at Cabool not having been pushed forward 500 miles further into Central Asia, to seize upon Herat, and dethrone the Monarch whose independence we had stipulated for in the tri-partite treaty."⁹⁶ MacNaghten's attempt to lay siege to Herat was foiled by Elphinstone and his war council. This was key in two matters. First, MacNaghten displayed the wherewithal to suggest such a folly. He could have gone through with the attempt if not for the outright rejection of the siege. Second, in Elphinstone's memorandum, he wanted more British troops in the city. An attempted siege would have removed a significant portion of the troops in Kabul, if not all of them. Taylor relieved Elphinstone of blame, "Therefore, in regard to the first allegation, that off the unmilitary disposition of the forces, he [Elphinstone] is clearly without blame, but he is commendable for having been the only military authority that had succeeded in thwarting, in any degree, the mad and criminal projects of the politicals."⁹⁷ With Afghanistan beginning to descend into chaos, leaving the capital city unprotected would have been foolish. MacNaghten's absurd notion to lay siege to Herat further showed the extent of the power he had.

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Commentators on the massacre also scrutinized the terms Elphinstone agreed to with Akbar Khan to allow a "peaceful" retreat. In return for a "peaceful" and "unmolested" retreat, the British were required to surrender their gunpowder reserves, muskets, and most of their artillery. However, Akbar Khan constantly changed the terms of the convention as the British made the ninety-mile trek back to Jalalabad.⁹⁸ The convention Elphinstone agreed to was called "pusillanimous" and "disgraceful." "The mere signing of a disgraceful convention is no blot upon the subordinate authority, and General Elphinstone might stand as much excused for that convention, as the Duke of Wellington for signing the convention of Cintra, or more so, since General Elphinstone was placed as a subordinate under a political authority. The fact of the signature, as of the conditions, is not positively ascertained."⁹⁹ Allowing Elphinstone to assume the burden of the blame for a poor agreement was absurd to Taylor. Elphinstone never had control; the politicals were the ones in charge. Commentators chose to criticize the terms of the convention, but the conditions which produced this agreement, as pointed out by Taylor, deserved attention too. "The conditions are disgraceful, or the reverse, by the necessities of the case. We have seen that his force was separated from his commissariat; that the commissariat was cut off. But this is not all. The troops, it has been stated, in the cantonments were in a position where they could be flooded."¹⁰⁰ The fact that the garrison was cut off from its supplies was well known. Now there was the added detail of drowning without having the opportunity to defend. The possibility of drowning added to the circumstances of the convention with Akbar, but it also added to the argument that the cantonments were poorly situated and designed.

The distribution of forces and the undesirable convention were not the only inquiries Taylor faced. Many other objections were made against him and Elphinstone. Rather than assaulting these objections, Taylor mindfully responded "'instead of allowing ourselves to be led on to assail that individual who has most claim to our commiseration, it would be as well to bring to consideration that there is not one point upon which his military conduct is assailed that will not at once suggest to our minds, even in the present state of our information, a justification which knowledge of the facts may yet substantiate.'"¹⁰¹ No information attacked Elphinstone's military management, and no new information would help build upon that point.

Emily Eden, a long-time family friend, wrote about Elphinstone's lack of interest in India in her diary. A reasonable amount of time is needed for anyone to adjust to a different lifestyle and culture, which Elphinstone did not have. She believed that not allowing time for one to familiarize with their new environment "would be considered madness to put such a man in a responsible situation."¹⁰² This was the position Elphinstone was in. He was newly acquainted with India, but Afghanistan was a different place. "It was, while in this position, with so many other experienced officers in India, that General Elphinstone was selected, not merely for Indian service, but for a more than ordinarily peculiar, difficult, and responsible branch of Indian service."¹⁰³ The case of Major-General Nott perfectly fit this situation. Taylor knew of the circumstances of Elphinstone's arrival, and most of the arrivals of most officers in India. A man not acquainted with his environment was almost certainly set up to fail. "It was almost impossible that a man so situated should not fail, and it may be inferred from such a selection that there was an intention to produce failure."¹⁰⁴ Taylor suggested that the way Elphinstone received his command made his failure inevitable. However farfetched this idea was, it was built upon the idea that there was overwhelming political control. Taylor elaborated, "that it is stated that many officers of experience had lately been removed from important situations in Affghanistan, their places having been supplied with men totally deficient of all local knowledge."¹⁰⁵ The fact that several commanders resigned or refused to take up the post was already a troublesome issue. However, the addition of "removals" created a greater dimension of political control. Taylor raised the issue of improper political influence of MacNaghten and the politicals, asserting that Elphinstone was at the very least partially to blame.

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The shift in blame to MacNaghten and his agents quickly gained traction. More people spoke out against MacNaghten's improper political activities and the unnecessary war in Afghanistan. Lieutenant-Colonel H. Fane, aide-de-camp to the late commander-in-chief of the British forces General Sir Henry Fane, shed some light on the politics of the government, not just MacNaghten. He wrote, "It can be proved to the British public, who are so purposely kept in the dark as to the reason of these great disasters, that this Affghan war or policy, described as so glorious and so necessary, was *unnecessary, unwise, and most unjust* [original emphasis]." ¹⁰⁶ Not only were the politics in Kabul "unjust," but most military men thought the entire campaign a folly. The campaign was unnecessary due to the fact the British made ill-fated alliances. The aid-de-camp commented,

Unnecessary, because the siege of Herat, which was the reason assigned for our forward and fatal move in Central Asia, was offered to be raised by our then real friend Dost Moahomed, Khan of Cabool, provided the British government advanced him 100,000/. to enable him to put his Affghan troops in motion against the Persians, whom the Affghans generally looked upon with the greatest horror, as infidels to the true faith.

Unjust, because we declared war against, and hurled from his throne, a popular King, simply because he accepted an alliance with Russia instead of with England, for the reason that the latter, his old ally, refused to protect him from the encroachments of his dangerous and ambitious neighbor, Runjeet Singh, of Lahore, who had already despoiled him of his most valuable province, Peshawur ¹⁰⁷

Simply, if Dost Mohammed was allowed by the British to do what the British wanted all along, the entire war would have been avoided. Alexander Burnes was the main British supporter of Dost Mohammed; MacNaghten and the rest favored Shah Shuja. ¹⁰⁸ The main reason for the rejection of the proposal to support Dost Mohammed by the British was that Mohammed accepted Russian diplomat Lieutenant Vitkevich to his court in Kabul. The British did not want a ruler who supported the enemy Russians, who encroached to close to British India. However, by the time the British decided who to support, the Tsar of Russia recalled Vitkevich and Russian influence in Afghanistan vanished, keeping the encroaching Russians out of Afghanistan for the mean time. A supplementary reason was Mohammed's dispute with Ranjit Singh and the Sikh kingdom over territory. "Russia promised much to Dost Mahomed Khan, through her agents; England withheld everything, even the most ordinary justice. The suppressed papers of the lamented and talented Sir Alexander Burnes will show all this, I can confidently assert; the reason of their suppression is easily guessed." ¹⁰⁹ Given this disparity, it was reasonable for Dost Mohammed to remain closer to the Russians than the British for political and financial support.

The same aide-de-camp argued that the Afghan war was a ridiculous idea and a logistical nightmare. He elaborated, "Sir Henry Fane did at the same time insure to the Governor-General, from the high spirit and courage of that army which he (commander-in-chief) had collected, organised, and put in motion, that success which at first attended us, but at the same time warned the Governor-General, that to maintain large bodies of troops in countries so distant [. . .] was next to impossible." ¹¹⁰ The scope of the campaign was massive; it was almost physically impossible to maintain large forces that the British wished to send into unknown territory. General Fane "the military head in India, and second member of council in that country, did oppose, or, perhaps, rather point out to the Governor-General, the extreme danger of this wild and unmeasured expedition [. . .] our communications with India at any moment liable to be interrupted by the fierce and war-like hordes on our front, flank, and rear." ¹¹¹ Auckland and his government ignored Fane's advice, not just once, but on multiple occasions. He stated,

But it will, perhaps excite surprise when I state that military advice, given by so old and experienced an officer as the late General Sir Henry Fane, was generally tossed to the winds, and that civil intrigue and civil advice generally stood in the way of every arrangement which the most ordinary military sagacity or foresight prompted or advised and I may confidently state that the advance into Affghanistan was solely prompted and advised by the late envoy and minister to Shah Soojah, whose ambitions was to play a great and distinguished part in that country. ¹¹²

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From the start, the Afghan campaign remained faulty, not only in reasoning, but logistics as well. The well-experienced Fane served countless years in the army, many under the Duke of Wellington during the Peninsular Wars. Appointed in 1835 to guide the military in India, he had little say in what should have been his realm of expertise, though he was qualified to so insert his grievances. Long caravan lines were needed to sustain a force of nearly 40,000 soldiers, not including their camp followers. The blistering heat and jagged mountain passes made the supply lines more difficult to manage. Afghanistan proved to be a formidable land to penetrate, and it proved to be an even more difficult task to control.

With the initial disposal of Dost Mohammed at the end of 1840, MacNaghten and the government deemed the campaign a success. "Every one is aware of the success which at first attended this *promenade militaire*, as it was termed by the civil officers of Government."¹¹³ The success was getting into Afghanistan. However, that was not the goal of this campaign. The British needed to maintain a strong presence. After months of occupation, the reports of rebellion began to surface. MacNaghten deemed these an "inconvenience" despite the rebellion slowing his communications. This was a logistical problem pointed out by General Fane and other military officials. "The inconvenience, to which we have been subjected, by the interruption of our communications, has been very great, but it only shows how easily annoyance may be inflicted, by means which would otherwise be contemptible, on a government."¹¹⁴

The power MacNaghten had in Kabul was known through accounts like Nott's and Taylor's. The aide-de-camp then turned to MacNaghten's politics and control over Afghanistan, writing,

Sir Henry Fane retired from command of the army of the Indus from ill health. This is a gross mistake; the principal and real reason was disgust at the extraordinary power, both civil and military, delegated to Mr. Macnaghten, such power as would have rendered the Commander-in-Chief of all the armies in India a mere cipher or tool in the hands of a civil secretary.¹¹⁵

General Fane perceived his command of all the military forces in India, Afghanistan and other subcontinent holdings useless by the absolute control of MacNaghten. He had control of the entire Afghan situation years before Elphinstone arrived. Fane's aide explained what little control Elphinstone had,

As England may be rest assured that that General had no power over the beleaguered army in Cabool; that he was appointed to command in the most trying and difficult circumstances and I will fearlessly assert, that sooner or later it will be discovered that the power and authority of the general was only delegated to him at the eleventh hour, and when it was too late to repair the evil caused by civil intrigue and meddling with soldier's business and the duty of the army.¹¹⁶

When the insurrection started, Elphinstone could do very little to prevent the commissariat from being taken by the enemy because of the cantonment layout MacNaghten had made. "From that moment our army was in the hands of the enemy to die or starve."¹¹⁷ MacNaghten had half of the troops quartered in his "palace," along with Shah Shuja. In addition to the troops being dispersed throughout the city, MacNaghten also played a significant part in the war council meetings. He often injected his own opinions and strategies, which Elphinstone and some of his officers disagreed with. Elphinstone did not receive "power and authority" until MacNaghten's death, but by that time, it was too late for him, as the garrison had already suffered many setbacks at the hands of the politicals.

Fane, like Pringle Taylor, relieved Elphinstone of fault for the cantonment design. At the initial onslaught of the insurrection, the commissariat was the first building to be taken. "At all events General Elphinstone did not place our principal magazines away from the troops in Cabool."¹¹⁸ Fane continued with the same argument as Taylor commenting, "and I will venture to say in addition, that the gross mistake of having our troops in Cabool divided, and nearly one-half of them cantoned about the quarters of the Envoy and Minister, was a purely civil arrangement."¹¹⁹ This went against all military judgment or "for the safety of the troops."¹²⁰ The dispersion of the

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troops was primarily focused on the protection of the “sacred” MacNaghten.

Fane proposed a hypothetical scenario: “Had even the gallant and indomitable Sir Robert Sale been harassed with an Envoy [MacNaghten] and Minister [Burnes] in Jellalabad, the difficulties of his situation would have been an hundred fold increased.”¹²¹ Sir Robert Sale, or “Fighting Bob” as he was known throughout the Company, led the initial expedition into Afghanistan. He captured the crucial fortress at Ghazni. After the suppression in Kohistan, Sale was requested back in India, disciplining the Ghilzai on the journey back. On his way back he, like Elphinstone, was harassed by the Afghans. In November 1841 he remained blocked in Jalalabad with the leftovers of his troops by Akbar Khan and his forces. Sale and force managed to fight the siege and were relieved by the Army of Retribution on April 1842.¹²² Fane praised the resilience of Sale and his troops. Sale spent a lot of time reinforcing the defenses in the city. The hypothetical situation placed MacNaghten and Burnes-esque characters in Jalalabad to interfere with Sale's plans, making the dire situation worse. Fane also welcomed Sale's brilliance “has it been for British honour, that such a man as Sir Robert Sale was in Jalalabad, and that that man was allowed the free and unfettered use of those high military qualities and sound judgment.”¹²³ In Jalalabad, Sale was allowed unrestricted use of his brilliance and that of his officers. Fane suggested that if Elphinstone and his officers were not pestered by MacNaghten and his rowdy politicals, the outcome of the insurrection would have been different, even if it was changed by a fraction.

In closure, Fane wrapped up his criticisms of the blame put unjustly on Elphinstone. He concluded that “the British public may yet hear strange explanations of the dreadful military disasters.”¹²⁴ But he warned that the blame they had placed was wrong and that the ones to blame were not of “courage, devotion, or energy, on the part of our generals, officers, or soldiers, but by the most unwarrantable interference of civilians with military matters, by which their moral energy and their best efforts have been damped and rendered useless in the hour of need and danger.”¹²⁵

When a political decision is made to go to war, the aspect of war is turned over to the military. In this, it is seen as best to leave the intricate workings of war to those who are trained in its aspects. The government should supply the goals of war, not the blueprints. The politicals and their dealings became too entrenched in the First Anglo-Afghan War, and the Company suffered because of it. Even what seemed to be the most trivial decision, a promotion, proved to be catastrophic. Elphinstone became the face of the tragedy. It was known as the “Massacre of Elphinstone's Army.” But he would not have even been in command in the first place if it were not for the needs of the political establishment, especially MacNaghten. Many targeted Elphinstone's lack of background in India and his health as major factors against his promotion, but this is exactly what MacNaghten sought. The politicals knew they could keep him under control. Elphinstone's health kept him out of the events and his inexperience kept him blind and unable to make effective decisions. The other candidates for promotion had been outspoken and heavily critical of the government, like Major-General William Nott. MacNaghten sought to micromanage every detail, but military personnel periodically went with their instincts instead of supporting MacNaghten's plans. The public backlash over the massacre targeted Elphinstone at first, but those more familiar with the situation quickly steered the blame towards the government in India and its representative on the ground in Kabul. In spite of the defense of Elphinstone, this was not how the Kabul Insurrection and the Retreat to Jalalabad were remembered. Over 150 years after the events, Elphinstone is still remembered as one of the “biggest military idiots” of all time.

¹Edmund Yorke, *Playing the Great Game: Britain, War and Politics in Afghanistan Since 1836* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 2012), 18-27.

² William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 339.

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³Edmund Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*. The term "political" is used to describe the political agents in Afghanistan and India during the time period. It refers to a person in the government. The term is used throughout primary and secondary sources.

⁴BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*, Thursday, July 7, 1842.

⁵George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman: from the Flashman Papers 1839-1842* (New York: World Pub., 1969), 98.

⁶John William Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan* (London: WM. H. Allen & Co., 1874).

⁷*Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 30, edited by Sidney Lee (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1892), 253-254.

⁸James M. Perry, *Arrogant Armies: Great Military Disasters and the Generals Behind Them* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996), 109-140.

⁹"Perry, James M. 1927- (James Moorhead Perry)," last modified January 1, 2009,

<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G2-3231900106.html>

¹⁰"Dr. Gregory Fremont-Barnes", Army, accessed March 24, 2014,

http://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/rmas_biog_fremont-barnes_oct_14.pdf#search=Fremont-Barnes

¹¹Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Anglo-Afghan Wars, 1839-1919*, (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 26.

¹²Edmund Yorke, *Playing the Great Game: Britain, War and Politics in Afghanistan Since 1836* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 2012).

¹³William Dalrymple, *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

¹⁴"About William Dalrymple," William Dalrymple, accessed March 23, 2014,

<http://www.williamdalrymple.uk.com/biog>

Dalrymple currently resides in India. This helped with his knowledge of the non-British material. He also has won the Wolfson Prize for excellence in writing history.

¹⁵Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (London: Penguin, 1982).

¹⁶Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 81-85.

¹⁷Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, vol. I, 103.

Burnes was the second most important political in Afghanistan behind MacNaghten. He was one of MacNaghten's deputies. He also was the one who discovered the Russians were trying to negotiate with Dost Mohammed. The Afghans hated him because he constantly sought out the Afghan women for sexual favors.

¹⁸As to who the savior is, we do not know.

¹⁹Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, vol. II, 163ff.

²⁰Mohan Lal, *Life of Dost Mohammad*, vol. II (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846), 408-409.

²¹Shah Shuja was the exiled king of Afghanistan. The British favored him because their other option, Dost Mohammed, who was already on the throne, was in negotiations with the Russians. However, the negotiations never materialized anything.

²²Private Collection, The Mss Journal of Captain Hugh Johnson, Paymaster to Shah Soojah's Force, entry for November 2, 1841, 1.

²³Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 263-265.

²⁴Lady Florentia Sale, *Journal of the Disasters in Afghanistan, 1841-42* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1843), 12.

Lady Sale was the wife of Major-General Robert Sale, who was in Jalalabad at the time of the events. She was also the mother-in-law to one of the soldiers stationed in Kabul. Lady Sale's account of the events in Afghanistan is one of the most detailed descriptions scholars have for the insurrection and the retreat.

²⁵Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 24.

²⁶Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 290.

²⁷Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 108-109.

²⁸Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 16.

²⁹Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 290.

³⁰Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 20.

³¹Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 111-112.

³²Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 19.

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- ³³Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 19.
- ³⁴Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 111-113.
- ³⁵Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 115.
- ³⁶Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 24.
- ³⁷Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 117.
- ³⁸Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 299.
- ³⁹Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 29.
- ⁴⁰Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 14.
- ⁴¹Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 120. MacNaghten's role in the "assassination policy" remains in dispute. Before his death he denied that he even took part in the policy. This could have been a misreading on the part of Mohan Lal as well as the Afghan collaborators.
- ⁴²Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 121-123.
- Unfortunately for the Afghans, the British would try to subdue the country two more times.
- ⁴³Eyre, *The Kabul Insurrection of 1841-42* (London: WM. H. Allen & CO., 1879), 217.
- ⁴⁴Letter from Captain Lawrence to Major Pottinger, May 10, 1842, enc. in Eyre, *Kabul Insurrection*, 236.
- ⁴⁵Eyre, *Kabul Insurrection*, 227.
- ⁴⁶Letter from Captain Colin MacKenzie to Eyre, July 29, 1842, enc. in Eyre, *Kabul Insurrection*, 227. MacKenzie was also present at the meeting between MacNaghten and Akbar Khan.
- ⁴⁷Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 316.
- ⁴⁸Eyre, *Kabul Insurrection*, 243.
- ⁴⁹Lady Sale, *Journal of the Disasters*, 45.
- ⁵⁰Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 131.
- ⁵¹Eyre, *Kabul Insurrection*, 259.
- ⁵²Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 331.
- ⁵³While death was common, troops deserting back to Kabul was the most prevalent issue for the shrinking column. Many Sepoys would rather try in Kabul rather than suffer frostbite or what they perceived to be certain death.
- ⁵⁴Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 339-340.
- ⁵⁵Major-General Sir Thomas Seaton, *From Cadet to Colonel: The Record of a Life of Active Service* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1866), 183-184.
- ⁵⁶Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 341-342.
- ⁵⁷Elphinstone Family Book of Lords, 57.
- ⁵⁸Before 1856, many British officers were allowed to buy regiments and command posts. In this case, Elphinstone was aided by his brother.
- ⁵⁹Vide, "Personal Recollections of the Waterloo Campaign," by Lieutenant Frederick Hope Pattison, who then served under Lieutenant-Colonel Elphinstone.
- ⁶⁰Elphinstone Family Book of Lords, 65.
- ⁶¹Emily Eden, *Up the Country*, 389.
- ⁶²British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection, Mss Eur F89/54, Major-General William Elphinstone to James D. Buller Elphinstone, 5 April, 1841.
- ⁶⁴Emily Eden, *Up the Country*, 389.
- ⁶⁵Stocqueler, J.H., *Memoirs and Correspondence of Major-General Sir William Nott*, vol. I, (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), 285.
- ⁶⁶BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/54, Extract of a letter from Asst. Surgeon Campbell in Medical Charge of the 54th N.I., dated Cabool, 26 July 1841.
- ⁶⁷BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/3/7, Broadfoot to Elphinstone.
- ⁶⁸George Broadfoot, *The Career of Major George Broadfoot* (London: John Murray, 1888) 26-28.
- ⁶⁹"Gout," Arthritis Foundation, accessed January 28, 2015, <http://www.arthritis.org/arthritis-facts/disease-center/gout.php>.

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⁷⁰BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷¹BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷²BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷³BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷⁴BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷⁵*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, online ed., s.v. "council of war."

An assembly of officers usually of high rank called to consult with the commander on questions of importance or emergency.

⁷⁶BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷⁷BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷⁸BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁷⁹BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, State of Afghanistan.

⁸⁰BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁸¹Stocqueler, J.H., *Memoirs and Correspondence of Major-General Sir William Nott*, vol. I, 82.

⁸²Stocqueler, *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Sir William Nott*, vol. I, 121.

⁸³Nott was an East India Company officer, which was separate from the Queen's army. Officers in the Queen's army were favored more than the Company's because of the prestige the Queen's regiments were under. Nott knew he would be passed on because in prior promotions, a Queen's officer had been selected in spite of his valuable experience.

⁸⁴Stocqueler, *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Sir William Nott*, vol. I, 256.

⁸⁵Stocqueler, *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Sir William Nott*, vol. I, 283-284.

⁸⁶Outram, James, *Rough Notes of the Campaign in Sind and Affghanistan: In 1838-39* (London: J.M. Richardson, 1840), 91

⁸⁷Stocqueler, *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Sir William Nott*, vol. I, 405

⁸⁸Memorandum by Duke of Wellington on Sir William H. MacNaghten's letter of October 26, 1841, dated January 29, 1842. Kaye, vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 404-406.

⁸⁹Memorandum by Duke of Wellington on Sir William H. MacNaghten's letter of October 26, 1841, dated January 29, 1842. Kaye, vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 404-406.

⁹⁰BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, Pringle Taylor to the *Morning Post* on Major-General William Keith Elphinstone, Saturday, April 9, 1842.

⁹¹BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, Pringle Taylor to the *Morning Post* on Major-General William Keith Elphinstone.

⁹²BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh* on Elphinstone, Monday April 25, 1842.

⁹³BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/50, William Keith Elphinstone's Memorandum.

⁹⁴BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

⁹⁵There is no definitive list of commanders, but there are multiple accounts saying that some would not take the position or gave up the position because of the cantonment layouts.

⁹⁶BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

⁹⁷BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

⁹⁸William Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, 320-321.

⁹⁹Charles Esdaile, *The Peninsula War: A New History* (London: Penguin Books 2003), 102. The Convention of Cintra, or Sintra, was signed during the Peninsula War. The French were defeated at Vimeiro. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, was superseded by Harry Burrard and Hew Dalrymple. They allowed the French to retreat, nearly 20,000 of them. The complete defeat of French forces turned into a French escape and was seen as a disgrace back in England. The Wellesley did not have a say in the convention, as he was overruled by Burrard and Dalrymple.

BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

¹⁰⁰BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

¹⁰¹BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

¹⁰²BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

¹⁰³BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury Edinburgh*.

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¹⁰⁴BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury* Edinburgh.

¹⁰⁵BL, OIOC, Mss Eur F89/47 Pringle Taylor to the *Caledonian Mercury* Edinburgh.

¹⁰⁶BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*, Thursday, July 7, 1842. H. Fane likely refers to General Sir Henry Fane's son. General Fane had a son named Henry Fane who was in the army.

¹⁰⁷BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹⁰⁸Yorke, *Playing the Great Game*, 26-28.

¹⁰⁹BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁰BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹¹BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹²BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹³BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁴Sir W. H. MacNaghten to T. H. Maddock, October 26th, 1841, in *The First Afghan War 1839-1842*, ed. by Bob Carruthers (Stratford upon Avon: Coda Book Ltd, 2013), 151-156.

¹¹⁵BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁶BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁷BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁸BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹¹⁹BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹²⁰BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹²¹BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹²²Dalrymple, *Return of a King*, xxv-xxvi.

¹²³BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹²⁴BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.

¹²⁵BL, OIOC, Mss, Eur F89/50 General Fane's Aid-de-Camp on the Afghan War, *Morning Post*.