BOOK VIII

Completion and Consolidation, 1818–58

CHAPTER I

General—From Hastings to Dalhousie

The year 1818 marks the beginning of a new phase in the history of British India. The period of internal wars and struggles for supremacy is over; India can be treated as a unity once more in a way not possible since 1740. The Company's administration had become in effect the government of India: in the ensuing period we can divide events into foreign policy and internal administration. Abroad the note was one of rounding off dominion, while at home it was that of restoration and organization; the new feature was that it now became possible to speak of an 'at home' and 'abroad'. Along with this external rounding off and internal consolidation went the first signs of that cultural transformation which has since become a major Indian development. At first it took the form mainly of innovations or changes based upon western ideas, but the beginnings of an Indian response, which was later to vitalize the whole process, have also to be noted. The period now to be dealt with covers approximately thirty years from 1818 to 1848. Dalhousie's rule, which in some ways marks the consummation of these tendencies, is so intimately connected with the upheaval which followed it that it will be treated in a separate section. The plan to be followed will include some description of the India with which the British were confronted in 1818, and of their ideas for dealing with it. It will then trace the thread of high policy at the centre and thereafter treat with specific subjects, such as the Company's foreign policy, its organization of the administration and social, economic, and cultural developments.

The state of India in 1818 differed widely from its condition under Akbar or Shahjahan or even up to the death of Muhammad Shah in 1748. The political system of the country was in ruins. Not only had the former unifying authority collapsed, but the chief rival for its heritage had in its turn split into a number of rival factions. The British in this sense were not so much heirs of the Mughuls as the legatees of anarchy. The Marathas had divided into factions of whom the most
hopeful was that of Sindia. With the death of Mahadji in 1794 his successors had lost their grip while their most energetic rivals, the Holkars, had in turn allowed their power to dissolve in family strife. The Sikhs had usurped power without providing order in the north, while the once vigorous state of Oudh had subsided into corrupt senility. All over Rajputana ancient princely houses had failed either to keep the Marathas at bay or to control their own feudatories. With the rise of the Pindaris and the paralysis of the Marathas it can be said that virtual anarchy prevailed from the Thar desert to the borders of Orissa and from the Sutlej to the upper waters of the Kistna. When the British came to Delhi in 1803 they found the villages to be fortified posts, only paying revenue at the point of the bayonet, and the city itself divided into wards for the purpose of plunder by village gangs in the neighbourhood. It was not safe to visit the ruins without an escort for fear of bandits lurking behind walls, nor to travel unprotected on the main road from Delhi to Agra. Robber chiefs and local rulers were interchangeable terms and Metcalfe officially listed some of the neighbouring chiefs as the 'Plunderers' of this or that. Malcolm's report on central India and Tod's account of Rajputana told the same story. British rule or supremacy was accepted without enthusiasm or much hope, but with resignation as the only alternative to an indefinite continuance of anarchy.

Along with political loss of control and purpose went administrative collapse. None paid revenue unless compelled, and the business of administration became a scramble somehow to secure enough money to stave off military mutinies by meeting a proportion of the chronic arrears of pay. Officers inevitably took what they could for themselves in the process. The cultivator had no hope of improvement and much fear of extortion on every hand, together with the ever present risk of plunder, torture, and death from marauding bands. The merchants dwelt in constant danger of loss from dacoits or armies on the march and of extortion from hard-pressed governments. Not even their loans to the ephemeral governments of the day were safe. The well-ordered administration of Mughul times had disappeared, surviving only, if at all, in the records of the local hereditary village officials and in the traditions of the old governing families.

The social and cultural state of the country declined along with its political fortunes. The state of the country was in nothing more clearly revealed than in the spread of social diseases whose germs always lurk within civilized societies ready to multiply and break forth should favourable conditions arise. The most obvious of these was dacoity, of which the Pindaris were the supreme example. The dislocation of society drove adventurous, hopeless, or embittered spirits to a lawless life. They formed the material for princely armies or robber bands, each of whom recruited from the other as fortunes rose and fell. The landless or uprooted man looking for a leader and reckless from despair was a typical figure of the time. A specialized form of these
men were the thugs, robbers and ritual murderers, who rose to prominence in these times and spread across central India to the terror of travellers and peaceful men. Suttee, or widow-burning, increased in vogue as the hand of restraining authority grew weak. As reason seemed to have lost its hold so superstition increased its sway. Astrology, always a popular adjunct of Indian life, rose to the status of a directing force. Pathological aspects of social life like infanticide and of religion, like hook-swinging, self-immolation, and throwing oneself before the processional car of a god, grew apace. Even religious devotees suffered from the general degeneration. Many ascetics, threatened like ordinary citizens with plunder and death, took to arms and formed bodies variously described as nagas, bairagis, sannyasis, or gosains. They can be traced back to the reign of Akbar, but their number increased with the general disorder. Examples are the Gosains under Himmat Bahadur who served Mahadji Sindia, and the Dadu-panthis in the service of Jaipur. The Sikhs were the supreme manifestation of this movement and the only body to achieve both statehood and the status of an independent religion.

Intellectual and cultural activities inevitably came to a standstill, for there was neither the security to encourage it nor the means to support it. Men of learning depended upon princely patronage and this patronage was now monopolized by soldiers and diplomats. The tradition was maintained in the Sanskrit tols and the Muslim madrasahs but originality was lost and its influence on the community at large declined. There was little sign during these years of new thought or of creative religious achievement. Living religion retreated to the quietist sects, whose devotees haunted temples of Krishna or Kali, or retired to the banks of the Ganges at Benares or the Godavari at Nasik. Here and behind the purdah of many devout homes much true devotion lived on, but it had nothing to offer to the turbulence of the times save abstraction and retreat.

The arts of life suffered in the general malaise. Architecture, like learning, could not thrive without patrons. Temples and mosques gave place to forts. No great and few good buildings were erected after 1750. In Delhi the decline can be traced from the great mosque of Shahjahan through the decadent but still imposing tomb of Safdar Jang (1756) to the insubstantial and uninspired buildings of the nineteenth century. Only in Oudh was the building tradition maintained, and here confusion of styles and elaboration of repetitive detail betrayed confusion of mind and loss of inspiration. Painting, in its Mughul and Rajput forms, suffered a similar eclipse and by the nineteenth century only survived as a living school in the foothills of the Panjab. The local languages were rich in folksong but the only major literary development was the growth of Urdu under the patronage of the later Mughul emperors.

Throughout Indian India there was little sign of fresh cultural development, or glimmer of creative activity. The most that could be done was to hold fast to tradition, the most that was hoped for was a return to former times. Indian society like the Mughul dynasty had lost the 'mandate of heaven'. Courage, energy, ability, devotion, and loyalty existed as ever in profusion but these qualities either wasted themselves in fruitless efforts and forlorn hopes or were enlisted in negative causes or destructive enterprises.

If we turn to British India we find superficially a somewhat different picture. Wherever the British went they restored order; commerce was possible, the revenue was punctually collected, and the courts functioned regularly. But man cannot live by peace alone any more than solely by bread. This peace was accompanied by no cultural revival, and save in Calcutta by few signs of intellectual activity. Indians were excluded from all responsible public life with the result that the best men stood aloof and estranged and power was largely exercised by the irresponsible agents of ignorant masters. The new rulers had passed through their first phase of naive corruption, but their good intentions and growing experience had not yet made up for their former mistakes and ignorance of local conditions. In consequence their administration seemed aloof though efficient and cold and distant if no longer harsh. The British were splendid but alien. Mirza Ghulam Hussain complained of British 'aloofness, absorption in their own concerns and surrounding themselves with sycophants'. When Bishop Heber was in Lucknow in 1824 he asked a jamadar who was complaining of the Oudh government whether he would not be better off under the British. 'Miserable as we are, of all miseries keep us from that', was the reply, and the reason, 'the name and honour of our nation would end'. The British had to rescue an exhausted society from anarchy and threatened dissolution, organize it and their own dominions with due regard to justice and local conditions, to revive, if they could, the feeble spark of cultural life and to break down by some means the wall of partition which divided ruler from ruled, foreigner from native. Such was the scene upon which the more thoughtful of the Company's servants gazed on the morrow of Hastings's 'crowning mercy' in 1818. They were neither dazzled, jubilant, nor even elated at their success, for they were too conscious of the magnitude of their charge.

The young officers of Wellesley's day had found his exuberant imperialism and aggressive leadership much to their taste and their disappointed diatribes against his two immediate successors have not yet quite ceased to influence historical opinion. Their successors in juniority showed an equal zest in acquisition; Edward Thompson has well described the excitement of these men at the time of the last

1 Note should, however, be taken of Shah Wali-ullah and his school of Muslim theologians at Delhi, whose work had important repercussions. See Book X, ch. 5.
2 Siyar-ul Mutaqherin, vol. iii, pp. 170-1.
3 Bishop Heber, Narrative of a Journey ..., vol. i, p. 405.
Maratha war, their feeling of being on the threshold of a new era with a world about to be conquered. Their seniors, on the other hand, had seen enough of wars and devastations and had become aware of the inherent strength of the society it had become their fate to control through its temporary weakness. Their note was that of caution. The former acolytes of expansionism were now counsellors of moderation. They believed that they were sitting on a social and religious volcano, quiescent and apparently burnt out for the moment, it is true, but liable to erupt into fresh activity at any moment. Metcalfe, writing like an old man at the age of thirty-three, emphasized his belief in the ‘precariousness’ of the British dominion; Elphinstone, steeped in the classics with the coolest of heads, feared ‘that the belief that our Indian Empire will not be long lived is reason and not prejudice’; Malcolm, for all his soldierly optimism, considered ‘that in an empire like that of India we are always in danger’; while Munro considered ‘innovation the ruling vice of our government’. They saw danger from foreign invasion, danger from a military mutiny, and danger from a religious explosion. If none of these things happened the people might so far develop as to replace the British in control. ‘This’, said Elphinstone, ‘would be the most desirable end to British rule’, but it seemed ‘at an immeasurable distance’.

The British dominions in India were now more extensive than Akbar’s in 1600, for if his empire reached to Kandahar, Kabul, and Badakhshan it had stopped short at the Narbada. All India to the Sutlej and the Rajput deserts was now under British control; beyond lay the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh, the loosely knit states of the Amirs of Sind, and the manifestly dissolving Afghan kingdom. The only stable government of the three was that of Lahore, but the Sikhs were themselves a minority and their régime really a military dictatorship by one community over two others. Two themes thus emerged during the next thirty years. One was that of foreign policy, which had as its motif the rounding off or completion of the British dominion within the limits of Hindustan. The other was the organization of the existing British supremacy and possessions into a new empire.

It was here, within the limits of British India, that a great policy decision had to be made. Granted the fact of dominion, how was the new raj to be administered? The simple solution of alien exploitation had already been ruled out as a result of the Bengal experience. India was to be administered for the benefit of the Indians. But what kind of administration? The solution which appealed to many on the spot was a virtual revival and continuance of the Mughul empire. The Company would replace the Mughul and his umara, would restore the administration along traditional lines, and would protect the country with their new model army. Trade would flow more freely than before, culture, the arts, and religion would revive under judicious patronage; new British would be old Mughuls writ large. This was the outlook of Warren Hastings and his friends and was implicit in the general
THE NEW POLICY

internal policy from that time on. Of course there would be ‘improvements’ such as the substitution of European for Indian agency in government, of British for Muslim criminal law and methods of administering justice. The whole tenor of British internal policy to 1818 was in the direction of a revived and improved benevolent despotism.

If India could have been wholly insulated from Europe and shielded from the ferment of ideas prevailing there, such a course might have been practicable. But even if ideas could have been prevented from taking wing to the East, the men on the spot were controlled by men in Britain who were themselves subject to them. The foreign rulers' ideal that everything should continue in its familiar groove was therefore shattered almost as soon as it was formed. The British agents were influenced by the currents of thought prevailing in Britain and their policy was shaped accordingly. To the views of men like James Forbes or Scott Waring who admired Hindu institutions and desired their revival and continuance were opposed the ideas of the progressive and religious schools of thought in Britain. The Age of Enlightenment included a belief in reason and a belief in progress; as embodied in the Utilitarian school it developed a missionary fervour and a belief that its principles were applicable everywhere. Its mouthpiece in Indian matters was James Mill, whose History of India was begun in 1809 and published in 1817. The latter was manifested in the Evangelical movement with influential leaders in William Wilberforce, the friend of Pitt, and Charles Grant in the Company's direction. For them Christian morals were applicable everywhere. They had a sacred mission, they believed, to introduce the Gospel into India, for Britain was now the trustee of India's moral welfare. These two schools of thought found little to praise in Indian life and thought. So much of Indian life was bound up with religion and tradition; to the Utilitarian this was superstition or the denial of reason; to the Evangelical not only this but also idolatrous or the denial of God.

Three broad tendencies of thought can be distinguished in the discussions of Indian policy during these years. There was first the Tory or conservative view, of whom the orientalist H. H. Wilson was perhaps the most distinguished exponent. Without altogether denying the possibility of improvements, they recommended extreme caution; they were impressed by the value and strength of Indian institutions; they desired above all their restoration and maintenance, seeing no possibility of their early collapse, and they were acutely conscious of the danger of provoking a violent reaction by unwise interference or hasty innovations. They wished to foster Sanskrit and Arabic learning, they opposed Christian missions, and they considered such measures as the prohibition of suttee as playing with fire. The second may be called the Liberal Tory view. It was to this school that the great administrators Metcalfe, Munro, Malcolm, and Elphinstone belonged in various degrees. They accepted the desirability of improvements and of the introduction of western ideas and values, but they were also
convinced of the value of the traditional institutions and the strength of traditional feeling. Cautious innovation was their watchword. They looked to an eventual integration of old and new.

Let us [said Malcolm] proceed on a course of gradual improvement, and when our rule ceases, as cease it must, (though probably at a remote period) as the natural consequence of our success in the diffusion of knowledge, we shall as a nation have the proud boast that we have preferred the civilisation to the continued subjection of India. When our power is gone, our name will be revered; for we shall leave a moral monument more noble and imperishable than the hand of man ever constructed.¹

The third school of thought may be called the radical with its rationalist and religious wings. Bentham and James Mill were the most influential rationalists with Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck, and Charles Trevelyan as followers; Wilberforce and the Clapham sect were the leaders of the religious Evangelicals. They advocated bold innovations, because they believed that prejudice must give way to reason and falsehood to truth. The light of reason and the light of the Gospel, once transferred to India, would shine of themselves. The Indians would convert themselves and the new order would begin.

It should not be thought that these schools represented distinct parties; they were rather tendencies in influencing those who determined policy whether in Parliament, the Court of Directors, or in the governing class at large. Temperament and chance modified logical distinctions. It may be said in general that there was a group for moving as little as possible, a group for making definite and planned innovations along western lines, and a series of gradations between the two. Through all the discussions can be detected the assumption that western civilization was on the march while Indian culture was static if not moribund; any changes that were made therefore must be in a westernizing direction. Secondly it should be noted that reform and innovation were now part of the English mental atmosphere. ‘Improvement’ was a magic word which even Tories applied to agriculture; few Englishmen could undertake anything without considering what improvements might be made.

The decisions which these schools of thought sought to influence were modified not only by their opinions but by the force of events, the weight of experience, and the prevailing assumptions of the British governing class. The force of events ruled out any serious attempt to sustain masterly inactivity; in many areas the confusion was such that there were virtually no precedents to follow. In many matters, as those of the criminal law or methods of administration, existing practice offended the humanitarianism, the conscience, or the sense of fitness of the West. In other cases new situations, such as the breakdown of authority in Bengal in the sixties, were such that they called for new remedies. And those remedies, where they were not simply restorative, like the attempt to revive village panchayats, were always inspired by

western ideas and modes. On the other hand the full application of the radical policy was equally interdicted by experience and common sense. Official opinion, which could not be lightly disregarded, was generally against it, and was reinforced from time to time by such events as the Vellore mutiny of 1806. In sum a policy like Malcolm's was in fact pursued. At first the emphasis was upon continuity and the necessity of caution; from the time of Bentinck it was upon the desirability of innovation without forgetting the need for caution. Not until Dalhousie's time was confidence sufficient to drive ahead without recking much of consequence. This mood was sobered by the Mutiny which induced a caution sustained long after other forces had arisen which made such an attitude first unnecessary, then harmful, and at last dangerous.

These new forces were the Indian response to western ideas and innovations. Prior to 1818 there had been little response to the western challenge other than the military. Princes knew much of western cannons and western discipline, but nothing of western science or the rights of man. It was in Bengal that the larger aspects of the western spirit first became known to the Indian mind. The widespread knowledge of English provided an ideological bridge; ideas flowed over in the persons of British lawyers and officials, missionaries, and disinterested men of learning like Sir William Jones. The radicals believed that these seeds would quickly sprout to replace the weeds of Indian tradition and were disappointed at the slowness of the process. A later generation virtually despairs and talked of the unchanging East. But the essential fact is that these ideas did begin to take root in the very years of which we are speaking. The germination and growth was much slower than expected, but the process had been set in motion, and as it developed it determined the great transformation which is modern India today. It is this process which marks the difference between mid-twentieth-century independent India and fifth-century Britain after the withdrawal of the Romans. In the one case there was an organic development from within, in the other a superimposed culture which remained exotic and alien. This movement owed its origin to the group of Bengalis of whom Ram Mohan Roy was the leading figure. During the second and third decades of the century they were working out the first Indian response, not to western power or diplomatic cunning but to western civilization as a whole. At the very time that Lord Hastings was completing the central edifice of British power in India, Ram Mohan Roy was tracing the lines of the first synthesis between East and West in India which was to transform that power by a process of internal development and finally peacefully to replace it.

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1 With the partial exception of Tipu.
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CHAPTER 2

The Political Thread. Lord Hastings to Hardinge, 1818–48

We have seen the policy that led to the reunification of India in 1818 determined by the interaction of events and persons in India and Britain. In India the gainful and impetuous Company’s servants were too much for the peaceful but also gainfully-minded directors. The ill-restrained urge for personal gain almost produced corporate bankruptcy and so provoked state intervention. From the time of Pitt’s India Act onwards (and indeed ineffectively still earlier) the state was both humane and unaggressive in intention, but the steady dissolution of the Indian political system together with revived fears of French intervention produced a state of feeling in which it seemed less ruinous to move forward than to remain static. Wellesley moved too fast and too far, thus provoking a reaction, and it was left to Lord Hastings to complete the process with a kind of majestic instancy.

The interaction of interests and views continued into the new period. But it is to be noted that the vital decisions of policy were increasingly made in London rather than in Calcutta. The stream of policy, like the stream of ideas at this time, flowed from the West. Professor Philips has noted that no governor-general could hope to do much without the firm support of the ruling faction in Britain. Minto was embarrassed by its absence, and it is a part of the greatness of Warren Hastings that he accomplished so much with so insecure a basis of support in London. In general the rulers of achievement were those with strong support at home like Cornwallis, Wellesley (in his early years), Bentinck, and Dalhousie. This helps to explain why the rulers who were promoted officials from Shore to John Lawrence tended to be static and cautious in their conduct. Their appointments were largely gestures of esteem and they could not rely for support for new measures on a solid political body in London. We can now turn to the political thread from 1818 to 1848.

The justification of Lord Hastings’s measures was their success. His debts made him anxious to retain office and his prestige and judgement made the home authorities willing to retain him. The final years of his rule are liable to be obscured by the drama of his early years. They were in fact studded with incident and developments of significance for the future. Looking abroad we have first to notice the acquisition of Singapore. On the final defeat of France in 1815 the island of Java, which had been governed by Sir Stamford Raffles for four years, was handed back to Holland as part of the peace settlement. A promising experiment in Indonesian administration thus came to an
end, but the fact cannot be overlooked that Holland was an ally of the
British and that Java had been seized in 1811 because it had been
occupied by the French while Holland was a victim of French aggres-
sion. Lord Hastings, however, saw the advantage of securing the sea
route to China and the Far East. In 1819 he allowed Raffles to occupy
the island of Singapore at the extremity of the Malay peninsula. Its
position was a strategic one, its harbour was capacious and its occu-
pants at that time Malay fishermen. Dutch objections were eventually
counteracted by the exchange of the British settlements in Sumatra for
the surviving small Dutch stations in India. Thus a new enterprise of
the British in the East was set on its course; the port of call has become
the centre of a highly productive region and shows signs of becoming
another dominion. In 1867 Singapore became a Crown colony and so
passes from our purview.

In India Hastings took one of those half-measures which was so out
of character that it revealed the nervousness and perplexity of the
British in dealing with the Mughul emperor. Their legal claim to
Bengal still rested on the imperial grant of 1765. Wellesley had care-
fully avoided either recognizing Mughul suzerainty in 1803 or repu-
diating it. In fact he signed no treaty with Shah Alam, but promised
him liberty and maintenance. To the emperor the Company was still
officially a favoured son; by the Company the emperor was beginning
to be regarded as a nuisance. In 1816 the presentation of nazars on
behalf of the government, a symbol of inferior status, was stopped.
But the issue of the Company's coinage stamped with Shah Alam's
titles continued until 1835. At the same time Hastings encouraged the
Nawab Wazir of Oudh, as a reward for loans during the wars, to
assume the title of King of Oudh. It was thought thus to divide the
Muslim allegiance, the Nawab Wazir being the political head of the
Shias and the emperor being a Sunni. In fact this action brought little
credit to the Nawab Wazir, being widely regarded as an act of rebel-
lion. The Nizam pointedly refused to follow his example.

Lord Hastings showed a surer touch in dealing with other internal
incidents. When the chief of Hathras defied the British in his fort in
1817 Hastings brought up such a weight of artillery as not only to
reduce the fort itself but also to give notice that no aristocratic recalci-
trance would be permitted. The lesson of Bharatpur in 1805 had been
learnt. On the conclusion of the Maratha war the nest of sea pirates
which still lingered on the coast between Kolhapur and Goa was dealt
with. In 1820 they were finally dispersed and a scourge to commerce
of the west coast which had existed since the days of Graeco-Roman
commerce disappeared for good. A Muslim religious outbreak at
Bareilly in Rohilkund was suppressed and an agrarian revolt in Orissa
in 1816 was treated with a characteristic blend of firmness and con-
ciliation.

In internal administration Lord Hastings must be given the credit
of taking the first steps towards the development of the country. His
tours opened his eyes to the ruined nature of the countryside. In 1818 he gave orders for the repair of the Mughul canal system, whose waters had ceased to flow in the troubles of the mid-eighteenth century. In 1820 the water flowed again into the city of Delhi and thereafter commenced the great system of British irrigation. He commenced the restoration of roads, which, with the returning security of the countryside, had more than a purely military value. In Bengal he advocated the development of education, giving private support to English schools and becoming a patron of the new Hindu college in Calcutta.

These measures were gestures which showed the direction in which enlightened minds were moving. But in the vital matter of judicial and revenue administration he made a more positive mark. Measures were taken to reduce the block of legal suits and the rigid separation of the executive and judicial functions was modified by combining the office of collector and district magistrate. A beginning with Indianization was made by enhancing the status of subordinate Indian judicial officers. In the revenue department he set on foot the settlement of the new conquered and ceded provinces which bore fruit in the elaborate Regulation VII of 1822. In the south Munro was engaged in restoring the ryotwari system of land settlement under the Charter Act of 1813 after the encroachment of the Cornwallis system at the instance of Wellesley. In 1820 he became Governor of Madras. In Bombay Elphinstone became governor in 1819 and with deft and careful hands eased the transition from old to new in the newly acquired Peshwa's territories.

Hastings's closing years were clouded by the controversy over the Nizam's financial relations with the house of Palmer and Co. in whose Hyderabad branch he was personally interested. He failed to intervene after irregularities had been exposed by the new resident, Charles Metcalfe, and might well have been recalled but for his personal friendship with George IV. But this is the only touch of regency morals which Hastings took with him to India and cannot obscure the magnitude of his services in other directions.

At the time of Hastings's retirement Canning, disappointed with his prospects in England, accepted the Governor-Generalship. But the suicide of Lord Castlereagh in August 1822 diverted him to the Foreign Office and British India lost thereby a lively chapter in its history. Lord Amherst was a friend of Canning and was brought in by a political shuffle in London rather than by any particular merits. The directors approved him for his China mission in 1816 and because he was thought to be a man of peace, and Canning excused him as amiable. He wrote to Huskisson: 'I agree with you perhaps in thinking the appointment which takes place not a very strong one; but . . . Amherst is at least blameless. . . . Upon the whole he is as good a barren choice as could have been made.' On this occasion Lord William Bentinck made a fruitless attempt to secure the appointment.

1 The wife of Sir T. Rumbold, a partner in the firm, was his ward.
3 Ibid., pp. 239–40.
During a seven-months' interregnum India was administered by John Adam, the senior member of council. His brief reign was signalized by the expulsion of John Silk Buckingham, the editor of the Calcutta Journal, for undue freedom of criticism of public officials. Thus another feature and issue of modern life appeared on the Indian scene. Amherst arrived in August 1823. He had been told that there was now no occasion for further wars and that a period of peace was expected. But he had no sooner arrived than a fresh war cloud emerged which dominated his four and a half years of office. Within a month the Burmans occupied the island of Shahpuri off Chittagong; this was followed by aggression in Assam and war followed. The Burmans had been pursuing a course of expansion during the previous seventy years somewhat similar to that of the Gurkhas, and like the latter, they had no idea of the force against which they were now pitting themselves. The war dragged on till February 1826, bringing much loss and expense and little credit to the Company. The treaty of Yandaboo began the transfer of Burman territories to the British which was completed in 1886.1 During the course of the war the dispatch of Indian troops by sea led to the military mutiny of Barrackpore in October 1824, which nearly caused Amherst's recall and would have actually done so but for political complexities at home. The checks in Burma led to unrest in India and this found an outlet in the defiance of Bharatpur on the occasion of a disputed succession. After his usual vacillation, which caused the retirement of Ochterloney, Amherst permitted Metcalfe to take measures for the final reduction of the fortress in 1826. Amherst retired in March 1828 and, perhaps in gratitude for his departure, was awarded an earldom for his pains. Like his contemporary 'goody' Goderich, he was a well-meaning man with no faults but the inability to rise to the height of sole responsibility.

Amherst's successor was a very different man. If Lord William Bentinck had a fault, it was not that of being colourless. He had been recalled from Madras in 1807 on account of the Vellore mutiny, for which the unwisdom of the Madras commander-in-chief had later been admitted to have been mainly responsible, and he never ceased to wish to redeem his reputation. He had served as a soldier in Spain (where Wellington disliked him) and he had represented Britain in Sicily and Genoa where his conduct gave some colour to the charge of impulsiveness.2 He was an advanced Whig in politics, a supporter of reform, and a disciple of Bentham. He owed his appointment to the support of the directors, to the death of Liverpool who disapproved of him, and to the approval of Canning who had unexpectedly become prime minister. Even then he was only the sixth choice. Canning died shortly after the appointment, and before he reached India the high Tory and critical Wellington was prime minister. His career would probably have been brief and unhappy but for the advent of Lord

1 See Book IX, Chapter 3.
2 For these episodes see J. Roselli, Lord William Bentinck and Sicily, Camb., 1936.
Grey’s reform ministry in 1830, which provided him with steady support in the ministry as well as the direction.¹

The directors supported Bentinck because he was a man of peace, a man of discipline,² and a man of economy. The Company’s finances were once again embarrassed, as a result of the Burman war, and they were afraid to face the impending discussions for the renewal of the charter on a deficit budget. But the real significance of Bentinck was that he was a man of the left, who carried within himself the ideas of the new age just coming into power. By carrying out the directors’ mandate for economy and by the good fortune of the advent of the reform ministry to power, he was able to give Indian policy a twist towards welfare and western innovation which it never afterwards altogether lost. The phrase ‘We have a great moral duty to perform in India’ was coined by the brilliant Ellenborough, but it was the man he sought to recall who gave it content and meaning.

Bentinck’s first duty was to economize, and it was the hazards which surrounded economizers in India which made the directors welcome a general as their agent. His economy measures were extensive and severe but it was the comparatively minor measure of the abolition of double batta³ in the Bengal army which gained him the title of the ‘clipping Dutchman’ and an opprobrium which even yet has not quite faded.⁴ In dealing with military discontent which ran to personal discourtesy and an attempt at social ostracism he displayed a combination of tact with firmness of which his earlier career had not given much promise. Age had tempered his zeal with discretion and sobered impulse to the point where it enabled him to act where others had only talked. The economies were personally distasteful to him and he privately denounced the batta reduction as pettifogging and ineffective. In all he saved £1 ½ million by economies in the civil and military service and left the treasury which he had found with a deficit of £1 million a year with a surplus of £1 ½ million. Thus far he had the directors’ enthusiastic support, but when he wished to use this surplus for Indian welfare, their ardour cooled. In India the government became again a going concern and in England the direction was able to face Parliament in more confident mood. The continued existence of the Company after the Charter Act of 1833 was in no small measure due to Bentinck’s financial measures.

Bentinck’s second great achievement was that of judicial and revenue reform. In the former department he abolished Cornwallis’s provincial

¹ For friction with Wellington’s ministry see T. G. P. Spear, ‘Ellenborough and Bentinck’, Proceedings of Indian History Congress, 1939.
² Bentinck was a full general.
³ Battas were allowances to troops when on active service. The area covered by batta was not reduced as the area of British authority extended. Hence the periodical disputes about its reduction. The new rule allowed half batta only in the case of troops stationed within 400 miles of Calcutta.
⁴ An example of this is the legend that Bentinck proposed to sell the Taj Mahal for the price of its marble. See T. G. P. Spear, ‘Bentinck and the Taj’, Roy. Asiatic Soc. Journal.
courts of appeal and circuit which had been largely responsible for the huge arrears of cases. Persian as the Court language was displaced by the local languages in the lower and English in the higher courts. Indian ability was recognized by the increase in the powers and salaries (and so status) of the Indian judges. This measure was the more readily agreed to since it contained an element of financial economy. Where principle was still disputed finance had opened a way. In the sphere of revenue he was faced by the complaint that the system laid down by Regulation VII of 1822 had proved too elaborate and ingenious. At the end of 1830 he set out on his great northern tour, spending the summer in Simla and the winter in the plains, in order to inform himself at first hand of the situation. The result was the launching of the revenue settlement of the north-west provinces under the auspices of R. M. Bird. Taking ten years to complete, its principle was that of a semi-permanent settlement for thirty years which would both encourage the tenant to make improvements and enable the state to reap some of the benefits. It respected existing rights, being made with large landholders, cultivators, or village communities according to the locality. A secondary result was the discovery of the value of the hills as a place for work as well as for convalescence. His example was quickly followed, so that he may be said to have inaugurated that characteristic feature of British India, hill station life.

Bentinck’s third great achievement was that of social and intellectual reform. His most resounding measure was the prohibition of suttee or the burning of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. This evil custom, frowned on by the Mughuls, had increased in Bengal under British administration and its prohibition had been considered by every Governor-General since Wellesley. Bentinck acted where others had talked and found, when it came to the point, that the opposition was surprisingly weak. Also important was the campaign undertaken by Col. Sleeman from 1830 against the thugs. These groups of robbers and ritual murderers, who formed both a plundering brotherhood and a religious cult, had also increased in central and northern India during the Time of Troubles. To these measures may be added the suppression of ritual child-sacrifice at Saugar island in Bengal and the active discouragement of infanticide. These steps marked a new feature of British rule; for they avowedly interfered with social and religious customs. The ground of interference was the universal law of humanity; it was now maintained that not even religious sanction could stand against the universal moral law.

From the correction of abuses Bentinck turned to positive innovation. The principle of encouraging learning and education had been embodied in the Charter Act of 1813. Bentinck gave the policy a new force and direction by laying down that the content of the learning encouraged should be western knowledge and the medium of instruction English. In this he was fortified but not anticipated by

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1 See further Book VIII, Chapter 7, pp. 647-8.
Macaulay, who had joined the council as law member in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833. In 1829 he had written to Metcalfe of ‘the British language, the key to all improvements’ and in 1834, before Macaulay’s arrival, ‘general education is my panacea for the regeneration of India’. The substitution of English for Persian as the language of the higher courts and of government business gave a powerful even if utilitarian fillip to the study of English and the spread of western knowledge. To this great measure may be added other examples of his forward-looking mind: the abolition of transit duties in 1835, the development of steam transport by river and ocean, the beginnings of tea and coffee cultivation and of iron and coal production, the planning of a network of roads, projects for drainage, and of irrigation canals, and the abolition of flogging in the Indian army.

In his relations with the states and with foreign powers Bentinck continued the policy of non-interference and non-aggression which he had inherited. In the case of the states he had to face the increasing embarrassment which that policy was bringing to the government. The security with which rulers were endowed within and without and the lack of any field for talent or legitimate ambition led to irresponsibility, indolence, and decadence. Bentinck found no solution to this problem. He forbore as long as possible and only interfered when misgovernment had gone beyond a certain point of bearing. In Mysore Wellesley’s raja proved incompetent and vicious. In 1831 the administration was taken over (as provided by treaty) and remained in British hands for fifty years. The Raja of Coorg was deposed in 1834 on account of his cruelty and the state annexed ‘in consideration of the unanimous wish of the people’. The little state of Cachar was also annexed at the wish of the people, later to become a nest of tea gardens. Oudh staved off the fate of Mysore by promises of reform. Elsewhere, as in Jaipur and Gwalior, disturbances stopped short of the need of intervention. Beyond the border peace was maintained, but in 1831 the first measures were taken to open up the Indus for navigation and a commercial treaty was made with Ranjit Singh at Lahore. Bentinck was the first Governor-General to envisage a Russian menace to India, but it is safe to say that both his and Metcalfe’s methods of meeting it would have been very different from Auckland’s.

Bentinck announced his retirement at a moment of political change. During the year between his departure in March 1835 and the arrival of his permanent successor Sir Charles Metcalfe acted as Governor-General. He had been continuously in India since 1800 and had been Bentinck’s right-hand man during most of his government. A liberal in sentiment, he was too experienced to desire foreign adventure and too rooted in habit to be radical in action. His liberalism, however, prompted him to one bold act. He repealed the rule of John Adam

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1 Bentinck Papers, Bentinck to Metcalfe, 16 Sept. 1829; and to Mancy, 1 June 1835.
2 The Grand Anicut in Madras was cut in 1835–6.
requiring printers to obtain a licence before publishing a newspaper. This so alarmed the directors that he forfeited his chance of permanent appointment. His year of office was in effect a year’s extension of the Bentinck régime.

The governor-generalship was first offered to Mountstuart Elphinstone who declined it on grounds of health. The short-lived Tory government then appointed Lord Heytesbury. But the Whigs returning to office before he had sailed, cancelled the appointment in favour of Lord Auckland, a good Whig and a nephew of Lord Minto. Auckland was an able and conscientious man, not to be compared with Amherst, but he lacked the personality to dominate a situation and was prone to be influenced by spirits more ardent than his own. He had a vein of moral weakness, which led him to acts which still seem, in perspective, to be wholly out of character. His appointment was regarded as a ‘safe’ one, but his sponsors forgot that the quality which consists of lack of positive faults is apt to prove most dangerous in times of crisis. There is no position like that of sole ruler and no conditions like those of India more apt to reveal the feet of clay beneath the dignified figures of party politicians.

Auckland was faced with foreign problems not of his choosing as Bentinck found states’ problems not of his devising. In intention he desired to continue Bentinck’s internal régime and up to a point he succeeded. He broadened and sweetened the western rigour of the new education by providing some encouragement for Eastern as well as Western studies; he developed the irrigation policy inaugurated by Bentinck, and he made the first large-scale efforts to deal with the famine which visited northern India in 1837–8. In 1770 the government had looked helplessly on while Bengal was devastated; in 1838 nearly 40 lakhs were spent on relief measures. But the lack of good communications prevented the sovereign remedy for large-scale famine, the quick import of grain from a distance, from being supplied on a sufficient scale, and at least 800,000 people are thought to have died. He also implemented the directors’ orders abolishing the pilgrims’ tax and all signs of official connexion with temples or religious festivals. Thus the neutrality of the state towards religion was given that absolute character which it preserved for the rest of the British period. Towards the states his conduct was not so blameless. The Raja of Satara was necessarily deposed in favour of his brother for intrigue and the Nawab of Karnal deposed altogether for attempting to wage war against the Company. But when the directors disallowed a treaty which Auckland sought to force on the new King of Oudh in 1837, he failed to inform the king of the fact. This lack of candour is an instance of a new vein of Machiavellianism which appeared in British Indian policy at this time and disfigured it for some years.

The shadow of Afghanistan has covered Auckland’s administration

1 Metcalfe resigned the service in 1837 but lived to be Governor of Jamaica in 1839 and Governor-General of Canada in 1843.
so darkly that not even the charm and liveliness of his sister's
descriptive writing have been able to lift it. The Afghan episode
will be dealt with in Chapter 3; here it is sufficient to point out its
connexion with British policy as a whole. The full story of the Afghan
war has not been revealed because the parts played by the British
Cabinet and Foreign Office are not yet fully known. But it should be
remembered that Auckland had not one set of mentors but two. Apart
from the eager politicos egging him on from Kabul and in Simla there
was Lord Palmerston in the full tide of his masterful diplomatic career.
It was Palmerston's object to undo the treaty of Unkia Skelessi by
which Russia had achieved a stranglehold on Turkey in 1833. He not
only considered the possibility of Russia putting pressure on Britain
through Afghanistan but the counter policy of putting pressure on
Russia through the same region. A pro-British power in Afghanistan
could influence affairs in Persia in which Russia was deeply interested,
and in Turkistan beyond the Pamirs, across which the Afghan domi-
nion spread into Badakhshan.

By the thirties Russian influence in Persia was such that the Persian
siege of Herat with Russian help seemed to be a direct threat to India.
It is significant that the siege was raised in 1838 on a protest from
Palmerston. Russian sensitivity in the east to pressure from the West
may well have encouraged Palmerston and the Whig government to
persevere with the Afghan adventure even though its principle justifica-
tion had now ceased to exist. A pro-British Afghan state would be a
threat to the Russian position in central Asia just as much as a Russian-
dominated Afghanistan would be a threat to India.

Be that as it may, the decision to move forward in the north-west,
taken in 1838, determined the character of Indian government for the
next period of years. From 1818 to 1839 India was substantially at
peace. Only one war of importance occurred beyond her borders, and
that was demonstrably forced upon the government. Internally distur-
bances had been occasional and limited in character; the keynote of
the period was peace, retrenchment, and reform. During these years
the foundations of modern India were being laid and the seeds were
being sown of that Indo-British cultural synthesis which later provided
the inner force of the Indian national movement. There followed ten
years of successive wars, each leading on to the other in a logical
sequence of aggression. The peace which followed was uneasy, being
disturbed by the second Burman war abroad, by annexations and
rising discontent at home. Not till after the storm of the Mutiny did
India again settle down to peace and constructive administration. By
then the spirit of the government was very different to that of the opti-
mistic liberalism of the thirties. Constructive effort did not disappear
altogether, but it was subordinated to power politics. A harder tone
crept into the voice of authority. Indians had not only to complain of
an 'aloofness' caused by British 'absorption in their own concerns' but
also of a pride of race and achievement which judged Indians to be
in inferior in both culture and character and saw no hope of improvement or regeneration.

The conduct of the Afghan adventure depended upon the maintenance of the Sikh alliance and the overawing of the suspicious but ineffective Amirs of Sind. The death of Ranjit Singh endangered the one and the loss of Afghanistan made it the more necessary to maintain a hold of the other. Lord Ellenborough, who was on his way to succeed Auckland before the news of the Kabul disaster was received, was not the man to meet a difficult situation with restraint or effect a withdrawal with prudence. A brilliant orator with flashes of real insight, he was vain and pompous, overbearing and irascible. He longed for glory which the situation did not permit and resented not only opposition but advice. His experience as Wellington’s President of the Board of Control had fired his lively imagination and whetted his ambition for power. He was chosen by Peel’s Conservative government in spite of his faults on account of his experience and ability. In two and a half years his changes of policy, his overbearing temper, and his theatrical gestures alienated nearly every responsible authority in the country. The withdrawal from Afghanistan was marred by contradictory orders and the farcical episode of the return of the supposed gates of Somnath from Ghazni.¹ Thereafter he superseded Outram in Sind, appointed Sir Charles Napier to sole military and political authority, and encouraged him in the measures which led to the defeat of the Amirs and the annexation of the country. Napier proved such an apt pupil that even Ellenborough entertained doubts of his conduct before the end.² Ellenborough’s final exploit was the overthrow of Sindia’s army in December 1843. The measure in itself was a prudent precaution in view of the threatening aspects of affairs in the Sikh Panjab; but its execution exemplified Ellenborough’s weakness for using the maximum of force with the minimum of tact. A comparison with Lord Hastings’s methods in 1817 illustrate the Governor-General’s lack of judgement and the hardened tone of the Indian government. This exploit filled the cup of the directors’ fears and indignation, and emboldened them to use their constitutional right of recall for the last time.

Ellenborough had little time for domestic affairs. But there is one measure for which he must be given his meed of credit. In 1843 slavery was finally abolished in India. The method adopted was to declare that the status of slavery did not exist and thus avoid the problems of compensation that so vexed the process of emancipation in the West Indies.

Ellenborough’s successor was Sir Henry Hardinge, a seasoned soldier who had fought at Waterloo and a statesman who had held office as Secretary-at-War and Chief Secretary for Ireland.³ His main

¹ The great temple of Somnath in Kathiawar was sacked by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1025.
² See Lambrick, Sir Charles Napier and Sind.
³ He was also Ellenborough’s brother-in-law, a fact which sweetened for Ellenborough the pill of supersession.
pre-occupation was the first Sikh war with its aftermath, which broke out in December 1845, within eighteen months of his arrival. But he was able to devote attention to internal matters as well. He developed the great irrigation system of the Ganges, and made the first plans for an Indian railway system. He supported education. In line with Bentinck he promoted the suppression of suttee and infanticide in Indian states and he undertook the suppression of human sacrifice in the hill tracts of Orissa. Under the lead of John Campbell the custom was stamped out between 1847 and 1854.

This period of thirty years can be divided at the year 1839. The first twenty-one years was a period of peace disturbed only by the first campaign in distant Burma and the brief alarm of the Bharatpur defiance. It was the longest period of tranquillity that India had known since Aurangzeb left Delhi for the Deccan in 1680. But it was not only a period of passive peace; it was also a period of active and vital reform. It saw the broad organization of the whole fabric of British administration in India. Before 1818 we can speak of the British power in India; after 1839 it is more correct to speak of the British empire of India. A dynamic force within the country had become its ruling authority. But the actions of the British did not stop short at organization. There were, in addition, a series of innovations which laid the foundations for the development of the India of the twentieth century. These innovations were all in a westernizing direction. Though presented as additions or alternatives to existing institutions, they constituted in effect a challenge to the past. The significance of these measures of the British was matched by that of the first responses made to the challenge by Indians in Bengal. These centred on Ram Mohan Roy and his group in Calcutta.

The last nine years of this period presented a marked contrast to the earlier years. The administrative reforms, the cultural innovations, and the economic projects went on as before, though arousing less public attention and pursued with less obvious enthusiasm. Their place in the public eye was taken by the series of campaigns, Afghan, Sindhi, Maratha, and Sikh which engrossed the attention of government, soldiers, administrators, and non-officials alike. A certain hardening was perceptible in the whole tone of the British government, indeed in the attitude of Europeans generally to India. The advocates of ‘westernism’ became more strident and aggressive, the conviction grew that nothing good was to be found in the Indian past, and that all reform must be western reform. The earlier faith of men, of high position in a quick and favourable response to the ideas of the West, along with the patience and willingness to wait, faded into indifference and scepticism. India had little to contribute to the future from her own past it was more and more widely believed, and no serious intention of abandoning it in favour of the western present. The attitude of trusteeship for an old and embarrassed estate tended to change to an attitude of ownership of a derelict property. The series of wars and
annexations deepened both the sense of superiority and of being conquerors which had long been prevalent among junior, subordinate, and commercial Europeans. The sense of trusteeship, where it continued to exist, was no longer that towards a ward in chancery, until a minor's coming of age, but that to a ward permanently absent or incapable. In the eyes of the governing class both in England and India, India ceased to be the scene of an impending cultural transformation, to become a conquered territory peopled by communities wedded obstinately to obscure and archaic cultures, strange in their habits, mysterious in their thoughts and hostile to all change. The myth of spontaneous reform was giving place to the counter-myth of the unchanging East.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

CHAPTER 3

*Foreign Policy 1818–48: Burma and the north-west*

The establishment of the Company’s dominion in 1818 brought with it a new problem of external relations as well as of internal development and treatment of the surviving Indian princes. The new frontiers were the Himalayas to the north, the Sutlej and the Rajput deserts to the north-west and west, and the tangled Assam hill tracts to the north-east. The only power in the north was the Gurkha kingdom of Nepal, with whom Lord Hastings had already tried conclusions and with whom the settlement of the treaty of Khatmandu was to outlast the British period. The Gurkhas were to prove an asset rather than a liability. To the north-west, between the Sutlej and the Indus, lay the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh. Relations were regulated by the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 which allowed the Sikhs to expand westwards and northwards at the price of leaving Sind and the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs alone. In Sind the five disorderly Amirs of Sind held sway, emancipated for the moment from both Mughul and Afghan dominion, but incapable in themselves of either serious aggression or concerted defence. Beyond lay the Afghan kingdom, at this time torn by feuds between the Barakzai brothers and the old Abdali dynasty and rivalries amongst the brothers themselves. 1818 was the year when the eldest of the brothers was murdered by Kamran Shah and Ghazni was seized by Dost Muhammad Khan. Beyond was Persia, just emerged from the shadow of the Franco-Russian alliance of Tilsit in 1807, which had cost her Georgia, and further threatened by a Russia refreshed and strengthened by victory. Russia enjoyed all the prestige of the vanquisher of Napoleon, but she had lately been an ally and her proceedings in eastern Europe and Asia Minor had not yet caused the finger of alarm to be pointed at large-scale maps of Asia. Continuing our tour, the seaboard of India was now secure with the defeat of the French and the annexation of the Île de France (now Mauritius).² Though Java had been restored to the Dutch, the Dutch were themselves dependent on British sea-power. In addition the founding of Singapore in 1819 provided the British with a strategical stronghold of incalculable value. There only remained the north-eastern frontier where a tangle of hill and jungle separated the plains of eastern Bengal from the rising power of the kings of Ava in the Irrawaddy valley and the Siamese kingdom in the basin of the Mekong.

If we look at the situation as a whole we shall observe that the British

² *Mauritius was its original Dutch name after Prince Maurice of Orange, successor to William the Silent.*
now controlled two of the three areas necessary for the secure domination of southern Asia. Command of the sea precluded maritime attack and secured control of the eastern border of the region, the East Indian archipelago. The Dutch here were virtually British agents since their power depended on the sufferance of British sea-power. The British hold over the Indian land mass was now nearly complete. The only thing they lacked which their Mughul predecessors had enjoyed was the control of the north-western rampart giving access to Persia and central Asia on the one hand and to the Indus valley and India on the other. The early Mughuls enjoyed this advantage by virtue of their possession of Kabul and Kandahar, covering the approaches to the Indian passes and opening a way to Persia through Herat, and of Badakhshan covering the approach to Kabul through the Hindu Kush range. It was therefore clear that the main energies of the British would necessarily be concerned with the problem of establishing a similar position on this side. It was long thought that control of the passes and the Afghan plateau was essential to Indian security; Shahjahan’s loss of Kandahar was cited as the first great blow to the empire and Nādir Shah’s seizure of Kabul as the beginning of the end. In fact, whatever truth this contention may have had for the Mughuls, it did not apply to the British with the same force, because the British had two resources denied to their predecessors. They possessed sea-power, and with it the ability to reinforce the land mass from overseas as well as from within, and they had in western military discipline and artillery the modern equivalent of the central Asian horsemen and Turkish artillery. They had the resources to repel an attack on the borders of India even if they had not the strategical position to prevent the attack being made. That position could only be modified if Russia advanced with sufficient troops to restore the balance of military force on the Iranian plateau. In 1818 Russia was still far off, but it was these considerations which gave Russian policy its enigmatic and sometimes sinister significance for Indian statesmen during the nineteenth century. If Russia appeared on the Iranian and Afghan plateau in strength she would threaten the British position in India. But could she, and would she? The solution of the strategical problem therefore resolved itself into securing a defensible line without necessarily advancing as far as the Hindu Kush and the Persian deserts. It was around the answers to these questions that the controversies of Indian foreign policy revolved, and it was the problem of a practicable defensive line which exercised the minds of soldiers and statesmen. By ‘practicable line’ is meant one which gave reasonable security and which could both be achieved and maintained within the limits of the diplomatic, military, and financial resources available. And it must always be remembered that the problem could not be worked out in a political vacuum, but was complicated by the presence of virile and warlike tribes, and of intriguing and on occasion powerful states in the area concerned.

During his five-year march to Indian supremacy Lord Hastings had
always kept a wary eye on Ranjit Singh in the Panjab who seemed to be emulating Mahadji Sindia in building up a powerful state based on the loyalty of a minority community and organized on western military lines with a leavening of European leadership. When he had therefore completed his work without interruption from the north and enjoyed four further years of peace he not unreasonably drew the conclusion that India could look forward to a period of external calm. Scarcely had his successor Amherst arrived in Calcutta, however, when he was faced with a threat from the north-east. Burma had long been the seat of a Buddhist kingdom whose dynasties had shared fully in the common vicissitudes of oriental kingdoms. In the year of Plassey Alompra, the founder of a new dynasty, conquered the province of Pegu and so added the Irrawaddy delta to his upper Burman realm of Ava. The Thais of Siam were next defeated, their capital Ayuthia destroyed in 1768 and Tenasserim annexed (1766). King Bodawpaya added Arakan in 1785, Manipur in 1813, and Assam in 1816. As successors of the kings of Arakan the Burmans called on Lord Hastings to surrender Chittagong, Dacca, and Murshidabad in 1818. But a defeat by the Siamese and Hastings’s disinclination to engage in fresh wars induced the respective parties neither to repeat or to resent the demand. As a prelude to their career of expansion the Burmans had repelled invasions from China in 1765-9, and since China was then regarded by them as the leading power in the world their pride and confidence were inflated accordingly. The Burmans were arrogant, isolated, and ignorant. They had no conception of the nature of western civilization and suffered acutely from the megalomania which is apt to come from prolonged success within narrow confines.

The first Burman war thus started as one of the simplest cases of aggression in modern times. ‘Brought into contact with the English they felt no fear: Ava was the centre of the universe, its arms invincible, its culture supreme.’ ‘From the king to the beggar they were hot for a war with the English.’ In September 1823 they attacked the island of Shahpuri near Chittagong and made hostile moves on the Assam border. British demands for satisfaction being designedly ignored, war was declared by Amherst in February 1824. The war lasted for two years and brought little credit to either side. The Burmans suffered for their ignorance and folly, the British for their obstinacy and lack of adaptability. The British planned to seize Rangoon by sea and advance up the Irrawaddy. This sound strategy was put into force on the brink of the rains in May, with the result that the army found itself cooped up in an unhealthy swamp, unable to move and decimated by sickness. Subsidiary expeditions through Manipur and Arakan were baffled by the climate and the difficulty of the country. The Burmans had a leader of genius in Bandula, but after his death in April 1825 their only hope lay in the climate and the terrain. As the British learnt to adapt themselves to the new conditions the defeat of the Burmans became certain. Tenasserim was taken from the sea in the autumn of 1824. The
final advance in the autumn of 1825 brought the King of Ava to terms and peace was signed at Yandaboo, sixty miles from Ava, in February 1826. The Burmans ceded Arakan and Tenasserim, withdrew from Assam and Cachar, and recognized the independence of Manipur. They agreed to pay an indemnity of £1 million sterling, to conclude a commercial treaty, and admit a British resident.

The second Burman war broke out in 1852 as the result of commercial disputes. The British resident at Ava had previously been withdrawn with the result that disputes in Rangoon were handled by bellicose governors on the one hand and tactless ships’ captains on the other. Dalhousie was averse to annexation in this direction and war was actually precipitated by the hastiness and mutual misunderstandings of subordinates on both sides. Once war was declared Dalhousie took care to avoid the mistakes of Amherst’s general Sir Archibald Campbell and he showed unusual restraint when his measures proved completely successful. The people of lower Burma, who were only partly Burman, welcomed the British as deliverers; the health of the troops was better than in many cantonments; the battle casualties were 377 and the cost less than £1 million sterling. Dalhousie annexed Pegu but refused to advance farther. King Pagan was succeeded by King Mindan under whose judicious rule friendly relations were maintained until the accession of King Thibaw. This war marked the real beginning of the British period in Burma because the earlier annexations had only been on the fringes of the real Burman dominion.

We now turn to the north-west. Until the end of the century the British were more concerned with the south of India than the north. Wellesley diverted their attention to the Marathas in the centre. It was their defeat and the capture of Delhi, the gateway of the north-west, that first brought the British into contact with the new problems that awaited them. Palm-trees and mango groves were now replaced in their imaginations by sandy wastes and arid mountains; the elephant by the camel. We may start our survey by noting the one point which continued fixed for over thirty years in the shifting scene of northern politics. This was the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 concluded by Charles Metcalfe with Ranjit Singh as the fruit of one of Lord Minto’s missions. This fixed the line of the Sutlej as the boundary between Sikh and British influence; henceforward the Sikhs on the east side of the river, or the Cis-Sutlej states, were under British protection. From this agreement flowed in due course the Patiala and Eastern Panjub States Union or P.E.P.S.U. Until Ranjit Singh’s death in 1839 the tract from the Sutlej to the Indus was in strong and friendly hands. The Lahore kingdom in fact was one of the few really successful buffer states in history.

The dissolution of authority to the south and west of the Panjab should next be noted. Sind had been subject to the Mughuls from 1591 to 1750. It then passed to the new Afghan Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali. In 1783 Mir Fath Ali Khan Talpura overthrew the last of the Kaloras
and thereafter, as the hand of the Afghan Shah Taimur grew weaker, became virtually independent. Tribute continued to be claimed but was usually withheld. Sind was parcellled out between three main branches of the clan, the Shahdadpur family ruling central Sind from Hyderabad, the Mirpur or Manikani family at Mirpur and the Sohrabanis at Khairpur. Mir Fath Ali Khan died in 1802 and thereafter central Sind was subdivided between his son, brothers, and nephews, one of their number being vaguely acknowledged as rais or chief. There were thus three main branches, one of whom was subdivided into four. These were the Amirs of Sind, and since the Afghans were too distracted to reassert their overlordship, the Amirs too indolent to strive for supremacy and too foolish to unite, the country was virtually divided into a number of independent but petty states.

In Afghanistan the dissolution came not by natural increase but by battle and murder. Ahmad Shah Abdali was chief of the Sadozai clan of the Abdali tribe whose name he changed to Durrani. He ruled from Kandahar and aimed at uniting all Afghans under his sceptre. When he died in 1773 his rule extended to Kasiristan and the Oxus on the north, to Kashmir, the Sutlej, and the Indus on the east, to the sea on the south, and to Persia and Khorasan to the west. In modern terms it stretched over Pakistan and Afghanistan and parts of what are now Persia and Russian Turkistan. It was a short-lived revival of the realm of the Ghaznavids and the Ghurids. Ahmad Shah left eight sons of whom the second, Taimur, became Shah. In his time the Sikh power grew in the Panjab and Sind was lost. Distrusting the Durransis he leaned on Payandah Khan, chief of the Barakzai clan. Taimur, on his death in 1793, left twenty-three sons, while Payandah Khan in his turn left twenty-one in 1799. Such fruitfulness was too much for stability and amid the interlocking rivalries of the several brothers and the two families the Durrani empire perished. Zaman Shah, after a march to Lahore in 1798, was deposed and blinded. His brother Mahmud Shah seized the throne with the aid of Payandah Khan’s eldest son, the kingmaker Fath Khan. In 1803 he was discarded in favour of the ill-fated Shuja-ul-Mulk (another son of Taimur Shah), to be restored by Fath Khan in 1809. The Durransis were now bound to Barakzai tutelage. A final explosion occurred in 1818; Fath Khan was murdered but Mahmud Shah and his son Kamran were confined to Herat; Kamran succeeded Mahmud in 1829 and acknowledged Persian suzerainty. The rest of the country was parcellled out among the Sadozai brothers. The ablest of these was Dost Muhammad Khan. He held Ghazni and gradually rose to eminence during twenty years of struggle and intrigue. To Ghazni he added Jalalabad and in 1826 seized Kabul and proclaimed himself Amir. He lost Peshawar to the Sikhs in 1834, but easily repulsed an attempt by Shah Shuja in the same year to recover the family throne.

The dissolution of authority in the north-west promoted the security of the British in India, but they were haunted by fears of more distant
600 COMPLETION AND CONSOLIDATION, 1818–58

threats. The first of these was the French in the time of Napoleon. His Egyptian expedition, and his known fascination with the East thereafter, caused the British to transfer the French threat in their minds from the south of India to the north-west. This directed their attention to Persia as the nearest stable power who might stand in the way of a French advance. In 1801 Wellesley sent the young John Malcolm to Persia where he concluded commercial and political treaties. But Persia was more concerned with Russia on her border, who had seized Georgia in 1801, than France on the Atlantic, and introduced French agents to counteract the Russians. The entente between Napoleon and the Tsar Alexander at Tilsit in 1807 reversed the Persian tendency to look to France as a counterpoise to Russia and drove her back into the arms of Britain. Minto strove to take advantage of this by sending Malcolm to Teheran on a second mission, only to find that the London Foreign Office had also dispatched its own agent in Sir Harford Jones. An undignified episode ended in the conclusion of a treaty in 1809 by Jones by which Persia undertook to deny any European power a passage through Persia and to help British India if attacked. Britain undertook to aid Persia in the event of an attack by a European power either with troops or with a subsidy and a loan of officers. At the same time Elphinstone’s mission to Peshawar produced a treaty with Shah Shuja which proved abortive because of his fall immediately afterwards. It was hoped by these means to turn Persia into a buffer between the Franco-Russian menace and India. But Britain and India were both too distant, Persia too weak, and Russia too near for the policy to prove successful. The amount of aid and comfort required by Persia was beyond the powers of a Britain standing at bay against a French-controlled Europe and a British India still absorbed by the Maratha problem. In 1812 Russia again attacked and by the treaty of Gulistan in 1813 excluded Persian vessels from the Caspian. British officers were lent and Persia hoped thus to strengthen her army against the Russians. The turning-point came when Shah Fath Ali was compelled by popular feeling to attack Russia in 1826. Defeat made it clear that the army was no better and led to a humiliating peace in 1828. Henceforth Russian influence grew at the expense of the British. Russia hoped to control central Asia through Persia and Persia to recover her lost prestige in that direction. In 1832 Khorasan was conquered on this plan and in 1834 the pro-Russian Muhammad Mirza succeeded his grandfather as Shah.

At the same time Russia’s position in Europe was much strengthened by her defeat of Turkey in the war of 1828–9, which involved accessions in Asia Minor as well as the practical independence of the Danubian principalities (the modern Rumania). She followed this up by the treaty of Unkiah Skelessi in 1833 which came near to establishing a Russian protectorate over Turkey. Russia would protect the Sultan from Muhammad Ali of Egypt, of course at a price; the process of weakening from without had been replaced, as in Persia, by the process of under-
mining from within. It looked as though, before long, the Russians would control the whole of the Near and Middle East. The warning voices of a Russian threat to India, which had first been raised in the late twenties, were now heard in high places. The treaty of Unkiar Skelessi was the signal for Lord Palmerston's diplomatic counter-offensive which led to the virtual independence of Muhammad Ali and his confinement to Egypt, the humiliation of France at Palmerston's hands in 1840, and the gradual replacement of Russian by British influence in Turkey. The support of the Turkish empire against Russian encroachment now became, and remained during the rest of the century, a major British interest. It is in the interaction of British policy towards Russia in the Near and Middle East that the explanation of much that happened in the two Afghan wars is to be found. If, argued Palmerston, Russia could alarm the British in India by moves in Persia, why should not the British in India alarm the Russians by moves in Afghanistan? Similarly the Russians could bring pressure to bear on the British in Europe by making their flesh creep in India. Both sides, the one through the possession of interior land lines, and the other through sea-power, were able to threaten the other in either direction. Events in one theatre cannot therefore be understood without reference to events in the other; the Afghan wars were essentially a part of the general Eastern Question.

There is one other consideration, frequently forgotten by the framers of policy, which should always be remembered. This was the feelings of the Afghans themselves. Through all their turbulence and feuds there shone one passion above all others—an objection to outside interference. In this respect the Afghans are the Spaniards of Asia. There is evidence that Dost Muhammad would have preferred the British to the Russians as did his son Sher Ali later. But both much preferred their own independence to either. Disregard of this facet of the Afghan character caused much harmful exaggeration of the Russian danger in the minds of British Indian 'politicals'.

When Lord Auckland arrived in India in April 1836 he found a difficult position confronting him. The Persians were threatening Herat under Russian influence, Dost Muhammad was asking for aid against Persia and Ranjit Singh, who had taken Peshawar in 1834, while Ranjit Singh himself was an ally of the Company. Auckland had hoped for a peaceful reign devoted to internal development. His course of action was determined in the first instance by a despatch from the secret committee of the directors, dated 25 June 1836, a portion of which may be quoted. The Governor-General was instructed to judge as to what steps it may be proper and desirable for you to take to watch more closely, than has hitherto been attempted, the progress of events in Afghanistan, and to counteract the progress of Russian influence in a quarter which, from its proximity to our Indian possessions, could not fail, if it were once established, to act injuriously on the system of our Indian alliances, and possibly to interfere even with the tranquillity of our own territory.
The mode of dealing with this very important question, whether by dispatching a confidential agent to Dost Muhammad of Kabul merely to watch the progress of events, or to enter into relations with this chief, either of a political, or merely, in the first instance, of a commercial character, we confide to your discretion, as well as the adoption of any other measures that may appear to you desirable in order to counteract Russian advances in that quarter, should you be satisfied from the information received from your own agents on the frontier, or hereafter from Mr. McNeill, on his arrival in Persia, that the time has arrived at which it would be right for you to interfere decidedly in the affairs of Afghanistan.

Such an interference would doubtless be requisite, either to prevent the extension of Persian dominion in that quarter or to raise a timely barrier against the impending encroachments of Russian influence.

The immediate consequence was the dispatch of Alexander Burnes on an ostensibly commercial mission to Kabul, but really to talk politics. He arrived in Kabul in September 1837, and two months later the famous siege of Herat by the Persians began. Matters thus reached a crisis, and a decision of policy was imperative. Dost Muhammad must be aided against the Perso-Russian menace, or another set up in his stead, or Afghanistan left to its fate. Dost Muhammad was at first eager for an alliance. But his price was the recovery of Peshawar from Ranjit Singh, whose loss in 1834 had just been confirmed by the bloody battle of Jamrud. Auckland rightly refused to desert a profitable Sikh alliance for a doubtful Afghan one. But he also refused to exercise any influence with Ranjit Singh for a diplomatic arrangement which would have saved the face of both parties. Burnes in consequence had nothing to offer Dost Muhammad who now turned to the Russians as his only other resource.

Auckland, assuming that Afghan overtures to Russia automatically involved Afghan hostility to British India, proceeded to the second stage of his policy. His minute of 12 May 1838 defined three possible courses.

The first to confine our defensive measures to the line of the Indus, and to leave Afghanistan to its fate; the second to attempt to save Afghanistan by granting succour to the existing chiefships of Caubul and Candahar; the third to permit or to encourage the advance of Ranjit Singh’s armies upon Caubul, under counsel and restriction, and as subsidiary to his advance to organise an expedition headed by Shah Shooja, such as I have above explained.

If Auckland had adopted the first alternative, which he thought ‘would be absolute defeat’, no ill would have happened as events very shortly proved. If he had chosen the second the result would have been the same. If the third had been persevered in the result would have been similar, because Ranjit Singh had no real intention of committing his forces to the bleak Afghan plateau, particularly in someone else’s cause. His choice of the third course was not disastrous in itself but

1 It was Burnes’s correspondence at this time which was garbled in the interests of Auckland’s government in the Blue Book of 1843.
led to disastrous consequences. First it involved Auckland in a battle of wits as to who should do the military work, a contest which revealed the depth of his diplomatic incompetence and dependence on the views of his political advisers, particularly Sir William Macnaghten. The result of the contest was the Tripartite Treaty of June 1838. The object of the treaty was to restore Shah Shuja to the masnad of Kabul. Ranjit Singh was confirmed in all his dominions and was to send Muslim troops to Kabul if called upon by the Shah. Similarly the Shah would assist the Sikhs if required. Sind was to be free ‘for ever’ from Afghan rule. In other words Shah Shuja was to have Kabul at the price of Sind with Sikh military and British financial support. Auckland was still uncommitted to military action. But Ranjit’s success consisted in the fact that he was not committed to military action with the British, but only with the resourceless exile Shah Shuja. He had only to sit still in order to force the British to act themselves or see the whole enterprise collapse. Ranjit Singh had outwitted Auckland. He sat still. Auckland now took the next of his fatal steps. It was determined in Simla that the British should do the work and this decision was justified in a dispatch to the directors dated 13 August 1838.

Before the final plunge Auckland was given one more opportunity of withdrawing in time. The London cabinet had protested direct to Persia and followed this up by the occupation of Karak. On the news of this action the Shah raised the siege of Herat, whose defence had been inspired by the courage and skill of Eldred Pottinger, in August 1838. But though doubts had been expressed at home, and the Duke of Wellington said that advance into Afghanistan would mean ‘a perennial march into that country’, Auckland persisted. His manifesto announcing the invasion was published on 1 October, before he knew that Herat was safe. But on 8 November he announced both the raising of the siege and perseverance in the plan.

We can now summarize Auckland’s errors which led to an aggressive and dangerous war without even the justification of necessity. He first overlooked the fact that Afghan love of independence was even greater than their love of turbulence, and was thus the most effective of all safeguards against Russian domination. His ignorance of Middle Eastern conditions might excuse him on this score, but could not absolve him from responsibility for the others. The next mistake was his failure to put pressure on Ranjit Singh to come to terms with Dost Muhammad over Peshawar. Then followed the decision to replace the exile of thirty years’ standing, Shah Shuja, who shared James I’s reputation of never saying a foolish thing and never doing a wise one, on the throne of Kabul. Next came the virtual release of Ranjit Singh from a major part in the work by the terms of the Tripartite Treaty. From this flowed the decision that the British should undertake the main burden themselves and the final step of persevering in the project.

1 In itself the Tripartite Treaty was only ‘a new and enlarged version of that made between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in 1833’. Camb. History of India, vol. 1, p. 495.
when all reason for it had vanished with the saving of Herat. Auckland saw himself as a diplomatic potter moulding the political clay of Afghanistan; but he was in fact the clay and his political advisers the potters.

The iron of war now succeeded the gentler movements of diplomatic pens and it only remains to record the first deceptive success, the later disaster, and the final recovery. The army of the Indus was formed during the summer of 1838. It moved forward in December 1838, 21,000 strong including Shah Shuja’s contingent of 6,000. At first all went well. Kandahar was taken in April 1839, Ghazni stormed in July, and Kabul entered in August. Dost Muhammad was a fugitive. But then the difficulties began. Shah Shuja proved unpopular and unable to win sufficient adherents to hold the country. In consequence the Bengal troops under General Cotton had to remain as auxiliaries. In fact they became an occupying force and a kind of double Afghan and British government resulted. Shah Shuja could only maintain himself at the price of foreign and infidel aid and this rendered an already unpopular régime an odious one. The result was a state of permanent unrest and sporadic revolt. Such a situation could only have one ending. In 1840 a revolt of the Ghilzais was suppressed and in November Dost Muhammad himself surrendered. But the country remained disturbed and the occupation costs steadily mounted. The home government ordered retrenchment and this was unwisely effected at the expense of the stipends to Afghan chiefs. The Ghilzais rose again and interrupted communications with Peshawar. On 2 November 1841 a concerted revolt began with the murder of Burnes in Kabul city. Then began the oft-told tale of ineptitude and irresolution which converted defeat into disaster and tragedy. The commanding general Elphinstone was infirm and imbecile (his appointment in spite of his own protests was another of Auckland’s mistakes); the political agent Macnaghten resolute but too confident of the power of money and diplomacy in such a crisis; the troops disheartened and exposed in the open cantonments instead of being esconced in the citadel of the Bala Hissar. Macnaghten was murdered in conference by Akbar Khan; on 2 January 1842 a treaty of evacuation was signed. On 6 January 16,000 men marched out of the cantonments and on the 13th Dr. Brydon reached Jalalabad as the only survivor. The rest had fallen to the Ghilzais and the rigours of the Afghan winter. In April 1842 the ever-luckless Shah Shuja was murdered by a nephew.

Such a disaster had never previously befallen a British-Indian army. But though Auckland was at first dismayed and despairing the disaster was not in fact complete. Kandahar, Ghazni, and Jalalabad were still in British hands and the Sikh alliance, in spite of the death of Ranjit Singh two years earlier, held good in a passive way. At this juncture Lord Ellenborough, who had been actually appointed Governor-General the previous November, arrived in February 1842. It was

- They were reckoned to amount to at least £1,250,000 a year.
clear that Afghanistan would have to be evacuated. The only question was how this could be done with the least damage to British prestige both within and without India. Ellenborough’s moves were erratic. He first proposed to evacuate the country after inflicting ‘some signal and decisive blow’ on the Afghans. The news of the fall of Ghazni so shook him that he ordered evacuation forthwith. But Generals Nott at Kandahar and Pollock who had reached Jalalabad from Peshawar stood their ground, pleading lack of transport. Ellenborough realized that he had made a mistake, but strove to conceal it beneath sonorous phrases. In July 1842 he repeated the order but in a note allowed Nott at Kandahar to ‘retreat’, if he considered it feasible, by way of Kabul and the Khyber instead of the Bolan, while Pollock at Jalalabad was allowed to co-operate with him. The onus of action was thus thrown upon the generals, and they asked for nothing more. General Pollock defeated Akbar Khan in two battles and took Kabul on 16 September. The next day he was joined there by General Nott who had marched from Kandahar by way of Ghazni. The European prisoners were rescued. The vindication of British Indian arms was only sullied by the blowing up of the great bazar of Kabul. On 12 October Kabul was evacuated and the army retired by way of the Khyber Pass. With them they took by express desire of Lord Ellenborough the gates of Mahmud of Ghazni’s tomb which were thought to be those which Mahmud had removed from the temple of Somnath in Gujarat in A.D. 1025. In fact they were of a common pattern and later date. With this brilliance and this anti-climax the first Afghan war ended. Dost Muhammad was now allowed to return to his country. He soon reasserted his authority and died in 1863, at the age of eighty, still in possession of power. The passivity of Russia during the first campaign and the later disasters showed how grossly the Muscovite menace had been miscalculated.

**AUTHORITIES**


For the north-west Elphinstone’s *Account of the Kingdom of Cabool* (1815) is a good starting-point. J. W. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan* (3 vols., first published in 1851) remains the principal authority. The garbled Afghan Blue Book of 1839 may be compared with the revised issue of 1859 after Kaye’s exposure of the suppression of important passages in Burnes’s letters. Sir A. Colvin, *John Russell Colvin* (Rulers of India, 1905) seeks to clear his father of responsibility for the war. For Afghan and Persian affairs see Sir P. Sykes, *History of Persia* (2 vols., 1920) and *History of Afghanistan* (2 vols., 1940). See also A. Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara . . .* (3 vols. 1834) and *Cabool; being a personal narrative* (1842).
CHAPTER 4

Sind and the Panjab

I. Sind

Because of its isolated position, Sind had, up to this time, played little part in the affairs of India as a whole. It was long a Mughul province, chiefly famous as containing (at Umarkot) the birthplace of Akbar. Its trade through the port of Tatta was restricted to the products of the Panjab and southern Afghanistan. For this reason the British, through the East India Company, had had little contact with the country; the prospects were not good enough. A factory was reopened at Tatta in 1758, but only to be closed again in 1775. The means rather than the will for trade was lacking. As the north-western region became more settled, interest in commercial possibilities revived and a mission to the new Talpura amirs was sent in 1799. But if the country was more settled the rulers were more suspicious than before and the mission came to an abrupt conclusion.

With the turn of the century political motives stimulated the Company’s hitherto rather languid interest. The French bogey descended on the country. Henceforward the British had a double interest in Sind, as a possible seat of trade as conditions grew more settled, and as a counter in the power politics of the north-west. In 1809 Sind received one of Lord Minto’s diplomatic missions whose fruit (after one envoy had been recalled for exceeding his instructions) was a treaty with the Amirs undertaking not to allow the French a foothold in the country. The treaty was renewed in 1820 with the proviso that no European or American settlements should be allowed. In 1825 a punitive expedition against the Khosas led to the visit of James Burnes\(^1\) to Hyderabad. He published the first account of Sind in English, and from this time dated ideas of turning the Indus into a great highway of commerce. So great a river should not flow by unused, seems to have been the argument, though where the commerce was to come from, since most of its course ran through deserts, and the Panjab was still unirrigated, seems to have been less distinctly understood. Lord Ellenborough’s easily kindled imagination took fire at the thought of the rolling waters of the Indus;\(^2\) in 1831 Alexander Burnes journeyed up the river to offer to Ranjit Singh a gift of English cart-horses.\(^3\) Alas’,

\(^1\) Brother of Alexander, the more famous Kabul envoy.
\(^2\) Ellenborough was President of the Board of Control 1828–30 and urged Bentinck to undertake this mission.
\(^3\) The cart-horses were regarded by Ranjit Singh with more curiosity than appreciation, being larger than any breed known in the Panjab, but unsuitable for riding. They died of overfeeding.
remarked a Sindi Sayyid, ‘Sind has now gone since the English have seen the river’, and so the event proved.

British interest in Sind having now been stimulated by a modicum of knowledge, the country became a plaything in the tripartite political manoeuvres of the Sikhs, the British, and the Afghans. The Amirs were deeply suspicious of all three, but they were helpless against any of them separately and could only hope to play one off against the others. The immediate danger came from Ranjit, who proposed the partition of the country to Bentinck at Rupar. That pacific statesman declined, and the British thus became the virtual protectors of the Amirs from the Sikhs from 1831 to 1838. The outcome of Ranjit’s proposal was the treaty of 1832, negotiated by Colonel Henry Pottinger, the first resident. By this treaty the Indus was thrown open to commerce with the proviso that no armed vessels or military stores should pass through. The fears of the Amirs were expressed and soothed in the article which ran, ‘the two contracting parties bind themselves never to look with the eye of covetousness upon the possessions of each other’. The essential case against later British policy in Sind rests in the first place on the unilateral violation of this treaty by the British.

So matters rested until 1838. When Lord Auckland decided that the British must bear the burden of restoring Shah Shuja to his throne the only possible route (the Panjab being ruled out by the presence of the Sikhs) lay through Sind and the Bolan pass. The treaty of 1832 was therefore brushed aside and in addition the Amirs were commanded to pay arrears of tribute to Shah Shuja though they held covenants issued by the Shah himself in 1833 releasing them from all further claims. Further, a new treaty was dictated in 1839 (and later revised in favour of the British) compelling them to pay 3 lakhs a year for a subsidiary force. They were told that ‘neither the ready power to crush and annihilate them nor the will to call it into action were wanting, if it appeared requisite however remotely for the safety and integrity of the Anglo-Indian empire or frontier’. This was perhaps the least excusable of all Auckland’s dubious actions at this time; to such depths can a weak man (in moral scruple as in will power) be driven in the effort to conceal the effect of earlier misjudgements. Sind thus became the military base for the campaign against Dost Muhammad.

Reparation could still have been made by withdrawal from the country at the conclusion of the Afghan ‘incident’. But the incident ended in disaster. Further, an Amurath to Amurath succeeded in Ellenborough’s succession to Auckland. The victories of Nott and Pollock were after all but the parting shots in a disastrous adventure. Ellenborough thirsted for some glory more positive than the subdued credit of a victorious retreat. There therefore followed the final episode of the annexation. On the excuse that the Amirs had shown themselves unfriendly during the Afghan affair (how could they have been anything else?) it was proposed to retain at least Karachi (occupied in

1 Tariffs were settled by a supplementary treaty in 1834.
1839), Sukkur, and Bukkur. Before James Outram, the resident at Hyderabad and a man of the highest character, could arrange this, he was superseded by Sir Charles Napier, who was given supreme military and political control, in September 1842. This eccentric swashbuckler possessed as few scruples as Auckland but had at least the honesty to avow it. 'We have no right to seize Sind', he wrote in his diary, 'yet we shall do so and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be.' New terms were presented to the Amirs, involving the cession of territory, the provision of fuel for steamers on the Indus, and the loss of coinage rights. Napier then acted as though the Amirs intended to reject the terms, seized the land demanded and razed the desert fortress of Imamgarh. The Amirs eventually signed at Outram's persuasion while absolving themselves of the consequences. A tumultuous attack on the Hyderabad residency gave Napier his cue; the Amirs were duly defeated at Miani in February 1843; they were then exiled and Sind annexed.¹ Napier remained four years to govern the country in rude but vigorous fashion. Outram returned to raise his voice in England against the policy but though he found support from the directors, it was too late to undo the past. It only remained to atone, by the administration of Sind, for the manner of its taking.

The whole Sind incident is one of the least creditable episodes in British history during the nineteenth century. There was the unblushing violation of the 1832 treaty; there were the dictated terms of the succeeding years under a naked show of force, and there was the cynical provocation of the final struggle. In more recent times these actions would have been labelled 'fascist', and in this case the newer title would have been more accurate than the old. But an appreciation of this public injustice should not blind us to the larger issues involved. Sind, like the rest of India, was fated by the current of the time to come under the transforming influence of the West. The process might have occurred spontaneously from within, as in the case of Turkey or Siam, or through protection, as in the case of the Indian states, or through annexation. The imbecility of the Amirs ruled out the first of these alternatives. The cynicism of Auckland and Napier presented the third in its most objectionable form. The issue was not whether western influence should penetrate Sind, but how it should do so; we can deplore the manner of its imposition while recognizing that Sind could not for ever remain isolated from the world, and that it was not in her own best interests that she should do so.

II. The Panjab

The rise of the Sikh movement, its entry into politics, and conversion into a military sect has been described in earlier pages in this book.² At the end of Aurangzeb's reign it seemed that Sikhism was dead as a military menace to the Mughuls. The tenth Guru, Govind, died in

¹ The Mir of Khairpur alone escaped.
² The Mir of Khairpur alone escaped.
1708. But his sons had been killed in battle and he named no spiritual successor. His follower Banda prolonged the struggle until 1716 when he was captured and executed and the revolt finally suppressed with great severity by Abdul Samad Khan. His surviving followers escaped to the hills where they lurked for a generation. Numerous small hill-forts in the foothills of the Himalayas from the Jumna to the Ravi attest to their outlaw existence during this period.

The Sikhs, it was thought, had been hammered out of existence. But the hammering did not in fact reduce them to pulp, but hardened a remnant to tempered steel. It is worth noting the transformation which this 'crisis experience' produced in the Sikh community. In one aspect the Sikh transformation was the well-known one of the metamorphosis of peaceful panthis or sects into bands of armed ascetics. But in the case of the Sikhs it was more than this, for not only the ascetic Akalis went armed, but the whole community. Guru Govind retained the old theology but altered the whole genius of the Sikh body. From a religious movement it became a separate religion, from a sect a distinct community and from a passive religious group a dynamic socio-political movement. Thus the worship of the one God and the disavowal of caste remained; the Muslim practice of meat eating was even added at this time. But a series of innovations strengthened the sense of brotherhood within, of separateness without, and above all, the sense of mission. The initiation ceremony encouraged new entrants and marked off the Sikhs from others: the greeting ‘Hail Guru’, the leaving of the hair unshaven, the title of Singh (lion or champion) encouraged the sense of separateness; the five ‘Ks’ provided as it were talismen of unity which appealed to high and low alike. With the death of Guru Gobind political power passed to the Khalsa or whole congregation of the Sikhs, and spiritual authority to the Sikh scripture or Granth Sahib. This work now took the place of the Guru as God’s representative among men and as such was the only object entitled to worship. Though the Sikhs as a body had now become permanently anti-Muslim in sentiment, it is interesting to notice the extent to which they borrowed from Islam even while they were striving against it. The emphasis on the unity of the Godhead, the repudiation of idolatry, and the disavowal of caste were lessons taken before the breach with the Mughuls. But the custom of meat eating and the various devices to increase the sense of brotherhood were all added in the midst of the conflict. And may we not see in the title of ‘Singh’ the emphasis on struggle, and in the concept of martyrdom the influence of the Muslim doctrine of jehad or holy war?

The remnant which survived in the Panjab hills was thus a body which, though apparently leaderless as well as stateless, was held together by a body of doctrine which made them look upon themselves

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1 The five ‘Ks’ were kesh, unshorn hair and beard; kungha, carrying a comb in the hair; kuchcha, the wearing of shorts; kara, the wearing of a steel bangle on the right wrist; kirpan, carrying a sword. See K. Singh, *The Sikhs*, pp. 29–32.
as a Chosen People and by a ritual of daily life which underlined their separateness both to themselves and to others. Nothing was heard of them in the plains until Nādir Shah's march to Delhi in 1738–9. From that time the loosening of authority in the Panjab encouraged Sikh groups to reappear in the plains. The troubles of the fifties were their opportunity and after Panipat in 1761 there was virtually no one to oppose them. Their advance was thus rapid but disorderly. No strong chief existed to check them, but no accepted leader directed their movements. They spread over the Panjab as a number of war bands gaining converts and recruits as they proceeded and gradually forming into a number of embryo states. In the next thirty years the Sikh body was grouped into twelve loosely knit tribes or misls, each named after a leader or some local peculiarity, and predominantly Jat by race. The only outward link was an annual assembly or Sarbat Khālsa held at Amritsar, and an annual meeting of chiefs at Gurumatta which fell into abeyance after 1773 and last met in 1805. In this desultory and roving manner the Sikhs spread as far south as Karkhanda, twenty miles from Delhi, and as far north as the Indus.

The time was now ripe for crystallization into political unity. The need produced the man. Lahore was first occupied by the Sikhs in 1764, but their tenure was subject to periodical interference. The Patiala state was founded by Amar Singh in 1767 and became the chief Sikh power to the east of the Sutlej. In 1792 Ranjit Singh succeeded to the headship of the Sukerchakia misl at the age of twelve. Only a youth of exceptional ability could hold his place for long in such tumultuous times. In this respect Ranjit bears comparison with Akbar, who succeeded his father Humayun at the age of thirteen. His great chance came on Shah Zaman's last visit to the Panjab in 1798. On his retirement in 1799 he confirmed Ranjit in the possession of Lahore, thus casting the halo of legitimacy over what was already his in fact. Though superfluous in a material sense, such a title was of great value in terms of prestige. Ranjit could pose as the legitimate ruler to Muslims and as the favoured of the leading power in the region to his own Sikhs. Henceforward his progress was rapid. In 1801 he defeated the most powerful of the Sikh misls, the Bhagis. In 1802 Amritsar was his and he thus controlled, as it were, both the London and the Canterbury of the Sikh nation. In 1806 he took Ludhiana, but his further progress eastwards and southwards was then stopped by the British. Metcalfe's mission and the treaty of Amritsar in 1809 which followed marked a crisis in Ranjit's career, and his manner of dealing with it confirmed both his judgement and foresight. He realized the power of the Company without the bitter experience of defeat, he extracted the utmost advantage from his sacrifice of Cis-Sutlej claims, and he used the occasion to fasten discipline upon his brave but unruly followers. The visit of Holkar to Lahore as a fugitive in 1805 marked the beginning of the disciplined Sikh army; the ease with which Metcalfe's sepoys bodyguard repulsed an Akali attack enabled Ranjit
to impress on his followers the value of discipline and so to extend it.
In 1818–19 he took Multan to the south-west and Kashmir to the north; in 1833 Ladakh was added and in 1834 Peshawar. Farther advance southwards, at the expense of the Amirs of Sind, was prevented by the British and westwards into Afghanistan by Dost Muhammad. But Peshawar was held in 1837 against the Dost's counter-attack. When Ranjit died at the age of fifty-nine in 1839 he was the undisputed master of a compact and well-knit kingdom possessing the only army in India capable of meeting the Company's forces on equal terms.

Ranjit with Ram Mohan Roy were the most remarkable Indians of their generation.

Here are two contemporary descriptions; the first by Charles Masson, who visited Ranjit in the eighteen-twenties, and the second by W. G. Osborne, who saw him in 1838.

In person, the Maharajah is a little below the middle size, and very meagre. His complexion is fair, and his features regular, with an aquiline nose. He carries a long white beard, and wants the left eye. Though apparently advanced in years, I believe he has not completed fifty. On the right side of his neck a large scar is visible, probably the effect of a wound. In his diet he is represented to be abstemious, but he has always been perniciously prone to copious cups of the strongest spirits, which, with his unbounded sensuality, has brought on him premature old age, with a serious burthen of infirmities: for some ailment, he makes daily use of laudanum. Simple in his dress, which is of white linen, he wears on his arm the celebrated diamond Koh-i-Nūr, of which he deprived Shah Sujah ul Mulk.

Ill-looking as he undoubtedly is, the countenance of Runjeet Singh cannot fail to strike everyone as that of a very extraordinary man; and though at first his appearance gives rise to a disagreeable feeling almost amounting to disgust, a second look shows so much intelligence, and the restless wandering of his single fiery eye excites so much interest, that you get accustomed to his plainness, and are forced to confess that there is no common degree of intellect and acuteness developed in his countenance, however odd and repulsive its first appearance may be.

His height is rather below the usual stature of the Sikhs, and an habitual stoop causes him to look shorter than he really is. He is by no means firm on his legs when he attempts to walk, but all weakness disappears when he is once on horseback. He has still a slight hesitation of speech, the consequence of a paralytic stroke about three years ago; but those about him assert that his health is much improved within the last twelvemonth. His long white beard and moustachios give him a more venerable appearance than his actual age would lead you to expect; and at fifty-eight years of age he is still a hale and hearty old man, though an imaginary invalid...

It is hardly possible to give an idea of the ceaseless rapidity with which his questions flow, or the infinite variety of subjects they embrace. 'Do you drink wine? How much? Did you taste the wine I sent you yesterday? How much

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1 C. Masson, Narrative ... in Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Panjáb, vol. i, p. 443.
did you drink? What artillery have you brought with you? Have they got any shells? How many? Do you like riding on horseback? What country horses do you prefer? Are you in the army? Which do you like best, cavalry or infantry? Does Lord Auckland drink wine? How many glasses? Does he drink it in the morning? What is the strength of the Company’s army? Are they well disciplined?

The Panjab state was neither a traditional Indian territorial state and monarchy, nor merely a dictatorship of one community over another. The Sikhs were as much the leading partners in the state as the Marathas were in Sindia’s or Holkar’s territories, but they were not communal dictators like the early dynasties of the Delhi sultans. There was an element of partnership with other communities, even if it was only subordinate partnership, and this included the Muslims as well as various kinds of Hindus. At the same time Ranjit did not claim the despotic sway of a traditional monarch over his own Sikhs. To the end, though taking the title of Maharaja, he claimed to be no more than the general of the Khalsa. He was, in some sense, its elected chief, and like Augustus Caesar, he was careful never to push his pretensions too far and always preferred the substance to the shadow of power. We can perhaps best describe the Sikh state as a communal régime with the lesser communities in the position of junior partners. They were subordinate, but they were not trampled on. As the régime grew more stable and time passed, there were glimmerings of a nascent Panjabi nationalism. This faded away in the troubles of the eighteen-forties, to make an equally abortive appearance in the first half of the next century. Too much depended on one man for such feelings to take firm root in the time available.

It is clear that the first pillar of the Lahore state was Ranjit Singh himself. To an average military skill he united a diplomatic guile which even the tangled politics of the time rarely produced. But it was the presence of other qualities as well which made him such an outstanding figure. He had an Elizabethan faculty for bemusing both friends and foes as to his real intentions. Very shrewd in his assessment of character, he knew whom to trust and when and how far. He was able to make all hopes and fears revolve round himself; he never allowed any one man a position of dominating power, nor drove anyone to acts of desperation or despair. He balanced individuals and communities against each other with uncanny skill. Muslims, Dogras, Brahmans, and Europeans were used to set off his Sikhs, and his new army, composed of all these, was devoted personally to himself. In consequence each leader reckoned that he had as much to lose as to gain by his disappearance. He walked secure in a court of ambitious and ruthless men and no one dared to touch him even when he lay helpless and speechless with paralysis. He dominated his contemporaries by intellect as well as by craft. The activity of his mind showed itself, as in the case of Akbar, in an immense curiosity. ‘His conversation is like a nightmare’, wrote Victor Jacquemement about 1830. ‘He is almost the first
inquisitive Indian I have seen; and his curiosity balances the apathy of the whole of his nation. He asked a hundred thousand questions of me, about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, the world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad of others of the same kind."

The next pillar of the state, which gave to it its remarkable stability during Ranjit Singh's life, was the principle of integration. The dominance of the ruling race was sweetened, as in the case of Akbar, by the co-operation of other communities. The principle of religious toleration was observed and the avenue to honour and confidence was open to all. The Fakir Aziz-ud-din was one of Ranjit's most trusted confidential advisers; Brahmans and Dogras with other Hindus, and Europeans were high in his confidence. Unlike contemporary Afghanistan, there was no permanent state of sporadic rebellion. The rivalries were personal and they were pursued within the orbit of a struggle for the leader's favour.

The third and most obvious pillar (after the personality of Ranjit Singh himself) was the army. At the end of his reign the armed forces directly controlled by Ranjit totalled about 75,000 men, and there were in addition the contingents of dependent chiefs, such as the Dogras of the hills. More than half of this number constituted the fauj-i-ain or regular army, which was organized on the European plan, and indeed included many Europeans in its officer cadre. The infantry owed much to the Italian General Ventura and consisted of both Sikhs and Panjabi Muslims. The cavalry, 12,000 strong, was organized by the French General Allard. It was said to be less efficient than the infantry, but was a capable and effective force. The glory of the Sikh regular army was the artillery, first organized by the French General Court and Colonel Gardner. Both the infantry and the artillery were unrivalled for steadiness; if the former was the equal of its British-Indian counterpart the latter was probably superior. These forces constituted the material strength of the Sikh power and as long as they held together and were capably led, they had no superior in the sub-continent.

The other pillars of the state were less imposing and of less intrinsic strength. The revenue and judicial administration was a fair imitation of the Mughul model and served well enough in an almost wholly agricultural country. But there was little attention to commerce or development. It is true that there was a public works department which was responsible for 300 miles of canals, but in general there was little realization of the economic possibilities of the country or any attempt to exploit them. The army in fact overshadowed the rest of the administration, monopolizing the manpower, engrossing the revenue, and canalizing ambition. The best men went into it, the wealth of the country was absorbed by it. After satisfying its needs there were no funds for constructive works. The Panjab therefore suffered the nemesis

1 V. Jacquemont, Letters from India, vol. i, p. 395.
2 General Avitabile, a Neapolitan, was for many years Governor of Peshawar.
which overtook every state in the nineteenth century which tried to support a modern state on an agricultural economy; there was nothing else which could be supported. The Panjab state was imposing but its roots were shallow.

Ranjit Singh’s policy was expansion within the limits of the possible. The political limit was the power of the British, recognized in the treaty of Amritsar of 1809, and the physical the cold of the northern mountains and the Afghan plateau which his Sikh soldiers never found congenial. Ranjit Singh went first to his fellow Sikhs, but he did not stop there and he was quite prepared to leave some Sikhs unredeemed if they were outside one of his self-imposed limits. Thus the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs were left as undisturbed by intrigue as by arms during his reign. On the other hand, having mastered all the Sikhs beyond the Sutlej he went on to take Kashmir in the north, Peshawar in the west, and Multan in the south-west. He cast covetous eyes on Shikarpur, the gateway of Sind, and would have been ready to absorb the whole of that country but for the British veto. But he had no desire to expand beyond the passes, because he knew the reluctance of the Sikhs to face the rigours of the Afghan winter and, better than Auckland and Macnaghten, the difficulty of maintaining a permanent foothold in Afghanistan itself. In the negotiations for the Tripartite Treaty he readily gave up his claim to Jalalabad in return for a subsidy of 2 lakhs from Shah Shuja. For him Afghanistan was a buffer against attack from farther afield, to be kept from dangerous strength by fomenting divisions.

The death of Ranjit Singh in June 1839 was the signal for the rapid collapse of the Sikh state. There was no one strong enough to control the uncouth but ambitious chiefs, and those ruthless men were themselves too shortsighted and egotistic to form an aristocratic union. The regular army was soon in control. There followed the Sikh anarchy, leading direct to the Sikh wars. Ranjit Singh’s only legitimate but slow-witted son Kharak Singh was murdered in 1840 and his son Nao Nihal Singh accidentally killed the next day. Sher Singh, a reputed son, succeeded, to be murdered in his turn in late 1843. Tumults and assassinations followed in quick succession. Sher Singh’s successor was the boy Dulip Singh, another reputed son, with his mother Rani Jindan as Regent. Sher Singh’s decision to deal only with deputations and not individuals led to the growth of the punches or military committees, which soon came to be the real seats of power. They debated policy while leaving discipline and command to the officers. They had the power but not the discretion of the Puritan army committees in England, and, above all, there was no Oliver Cromwell to guide them. There could only be one answer to political anarchy and factional military leadership. If the army could not be controlled it must be disbanded or its energies diverted in war. No one dared to attempt the former and so the latter was the only resource. Anti-British feeling and suspicion of British intentions were on the increase; respect for British
military power had received a blow in the Afghan war, and there were a number of minor disputes. The army was therefore willing to move but it was the desire to be rid of the military menace which induced the Regent Rani Jindan, Lal Singh the Wazir, and Teja Singh the commander-in-chief to countenance the move. It was the same motive which accounted for the irresolution with which the war was waged.

On the British side the danger of war had long been apparent as the crisis in the Panjab grew chronic and steadily deeper. The desire to secure his rear in the event of war had weighed with Ellenborough in overthrowing Sindia's army in 1843. Auckland, Ellenborough, and Hardinge had all increased the forces between Meerut and the Sutlej, until they reached a total of 40,000 men and 94 guns. Since the disciplined Sikh forces now numbered about 60,000 with several hundred guns, this cannot be considered provocative. Like many unsteady régimes, the Sikh government had the choice of war or internal turmoil and it chose war.

The Sikh army crossed the Sutlej on 11 December 1845. It was a soldier's war, brief and bloody. In the two battles of Mudki and Firozshah the Sikh thrust on Firozpur was driven back; a dash towards Ludhiana was thrown back at Aliwal and the Sikh army was finally broken up at Sobraon on 10 February 1846. There was little generalship on either side. Mutual distrust paralysed the Sikh command and on the British side the commander-in-chief, Sir Hugh Gough, preferred bull-headed frontal attacks to tactics and the use of artillery. The result was desperate fighting and severe battles. The military lessons of the war were the fighting value of the Sikh soldier which came as a revelation to many on the British side and the old Napoleonic lesson of the importance of artillery.

The Sikh state now lay prostrate and its disposal became a pressing problem. One solution was to annex the Panjab outright. But this would both have removed a hitherto useful buffer against aggression from the north-west and severely taxed British strength in holding down so large an area filled with a martial and disaffected people. The solution of a subsidiary force on the Maratha plan was rejected on the ground that it would probably lead to further conflict. In fact it might have enabled Mulraj's rebellion in 1848 to have been nipped in the bud and so saved much blood and treasure and perhaps some Panjabi autonomy. The actual solution was an attempt to revive the Sikh state in a more healthy form by pruning away its militarism and providing British guidance. By the treaty of Lahore of 9 March 1846, the Sikh army was limited to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. The Jallandhar doab, Kashmir, and its dependencies were ceded to the British and an indemnity of £500,000 sterling was exacted. The Maharaja's government was recognized and a British resident established in Lahore of advise it. The settlement was completed by the handing over to Kashmir to the Dogra chief of Jammu, Golab Singh, who had nicely calculated the precise moment for abandoning the cause to which he
owed all his fortune, for £1 million sterling. The effects of this ill-
omened act have not yet ceased to operate.

The resident appointed under the treaty was Sir Henry Lawrence. On grounds of personality and sympathy with traditional chiefs no better choice could have been made. Yet his very zeal for reform was one of the factors which shattered his dream of re-creating the Sikh state on modern and humane lines. Sikh militarism was scotched, not destroyed; Sikh nationalism looked to a revival rather than regeneration from within and therefore regarded all reforms as so much western interference. At first matters went well. Within a year Lawrence was using Sikh troops to help crush a revolt in Kashmir. But at the end of 1846 the regency had to be replaced by a regency council of eight sardars with Lawrence himself as their president and the British garrisons were continued for another eight years. This was done at the request of friendly chiefs, but necessarily deepened the fissure between extremist patriots and those who were now regarded as fellow travelers with the foreigner. The very merits of Lawrence’s vigorous rule strengthened the extremist party. In attacking such abuses as sattee, female infanticide, ferocious punishments, and vexatious taxes he was held to be attacking traditional life in general. The common people heard him gladly, but the sardars muttered in private and bided their time.

The departure of Lawrence on leave at the end of 1847 perhaps hastened but did not cause an outbreak which was as nearly as possible inevitable. But his absence may well have been responsible for converting what began as a local defiance in a distant stronghold into a national rising. In April 1848 Diwan Mulraj, the Governor of Multan, took up arms after two British officers, who had been sent to install his Sikh successor, had been murdered. Lord Dalhousie had only been three months in office and accepted General Gough’s advice that punitive operations should be delayed till the autumn. Though young Herbert Edwardes attacked Mulraj with what local levies he could gather he could not assault the fortress or prevent the spread of the revolt. The crisis came in September when a large Sikh force sent by the resident and the Lahore Durbar under Shah Singh went over to Mulraj. A local and very natural rising had become a national revolt. Dalhousie then acted with the vigour he never afterwards lost. On 10 October he declared, ‘unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war, and on my words, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance’.1 Lord Gough was again in command and crossed the Ravi on 16 November. The two inconclusive and costly battles of Ramnagar and Chillianwala2 led up to the decisive battle of Gujarat.

1 Vengeance is here used in the sense of the French ‘a outrance’, or ‘to the limit’, and not in the common sense of taking revenge.
2 The losses on this occasion (2,446 casualties, 4 guns, and 3 colours) so stirred public feeling in London that Napier was sent out to replace Gough. Gough won Gujarat before Napier could arrive.
The Panjab was now annexed outright by Dalhousie on his own responsibility. He could get no clear lead from London, and while some authorities like Ellenborough and Henry Lawrence were against it, others like John Lawrence were in favour. The choice really lay between annexation and administration for a time on the Mysore model. Against this latter could be argued the fact that the Panjab was a frontier tract instead of lying deep within British territory; the same risks could not therefore be taken. A second national rising could not be risked. Dalhousie had no use for effete monarchies or oriental tradition; all that he knew of the old Sikh government he considered to be bad; for him annexation was a matter of common sense and common humanity. Opinion in general, then born along on the flowing tide of western self-confidence, was with him, and if efficient administration was to be taken as the sole criterion of government, the case was irresistible. But something is lost in corporate personality every time a nation loses its independence. The modern spirit had to come to the Panjab with all its material benefits and spiritual unrest. But if it had come by the free action of a reforming party within rather than by the compulsion of an alien rule, the conversion would have been more complete in the long run though it might have been slower in the beginning. Much that later happened in the Panjab might then have been avoided, including the division of India. The Sikhs by their own folly threw away the first chance of a Panjab organically integrated into a healthy plural society, Dalhousie by his over-confidence the second. Henry Lawrence had been too hasty with his reforms but his prescription was on the right lines.

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1 Dulip Singh was pensioned. He later lived in England as a country gentleman.
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