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'Perso-Afghan Frontier. MEMORANDUM BY SIR WEST RIDGEWAY.'

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About this record

This file consists of a memorandum written by Sir West Ridgeway, in which the author records his opinion that it is not the fault of the British Government that the Perso-Afghan boundary dispute at Hashtadan remains unsettled. The author goes on to suggest that the dispute be allowed to continue unresolved until the Russo-Afghan boundary has been settled and perhaps until after the death of the Amir [Emir] of Afghanistan.

A further note records that the Shah of Persia subsequently accepted the arbitration of the Indian Government in the Hashtadan dispute.

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Perso-Afghan Frontier.

MEMORANDUM BY SIR WEST RIDGEWAY.

1. It is not our fault that the Hashtadan dispute has not been settled. Mr. Merk was deputed by Sir P. Lumsden in April 1885 to inquire into the dispute, and the Persian and Afghan Governments were asked to send officers to meet him. The Afghans complied, but the Persians did not. Accordingly the inquiry fell through.

2. The next step was to advise the Persian Government to settle the matter direct with the Amir, but nothing, I believe, has been done in that direction.

3. I have pointed out in my Despatch No. 45 of 24th May 1885 the great desirability of settling the whole Perso-Afghan frontier. Nearly all its length is at present uncultivated and unoccupied, but some settlements will spring up and a definition will be a very difficult matter. My survey officers fixed trigonometrically the necessary points, so Colonel MacLean with a native surveyor could easily do all that is necessary.

4. Nevertheless, I do not think the present time opportune for deciding the question. Certainly the Russo-Afghan frontier, as far as the Oxus, should first be disposed of. When that is done, I would have a local inquiry made as regards the Perso-Afghan frontier, but if the Amir remains as unreasonable and impracticable as he is at present, I would not announce the decision—unless it is highly favourable to Afghanistan—until the Amir's death. But I would have the decision ready, and announce it to the next Amir on his accession.

5. Malcom Khan's proposal seems to me very impracticable. The approximate frontier from Zulficar to Chah Zagak is sufficiently known and marked in our maps. It is the details that have to be settled, and in order to enable this to be done a local inquiry and a detailed map are necessary.

W. R.

23rd February 1887.

Note.—[Under date 24th February 1887, Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran telegraphs that the Shah has accepted the arbitration of the Indian Government in the Hashtadan question.—E. N.]

'Perso-Afghan Frontier. MEMORANDUM BY SIR WEST RIDGEWAY.' [206v] (2/2)

