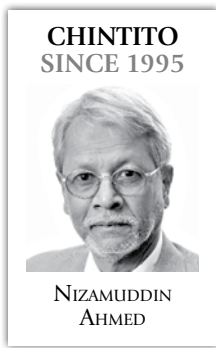


# For the honour of Scouter, Lt Gen Robert Baden-Powell



**CHINTITO SINCE 1995**  
**NIZAMUDDIN AHMED**

Edward Colston. Perplexing though was the inclusion of the statue of Baden-Powell, the founder of the worldwide Scout Movement, in their "Topple the Racists" list of sixty statues.

BLM activists claim that Baden-Powell aka Lieutenant-General Robert Stephenson Smyth of the British Army, while besieged in the Mafeking garrison during the 2nd Boer War (1899-1902), starved two thousand black Africans of food and water, even of their own, which he had earlier forcibly taken over. However, about 30 years ago, his biographer Tim Jeal had categorically stated in *Baden-Powell* (1989), "This is an absolute lie. He (actually) opened soup kitchens and shot all of his cavalry horses so that he could feed them."

Baden-Powell's 217 days of "somewhat voluntary" siege at Mafeking was all heroic. He had demonstrated lack of military wisdom, and was guilty of insubordination. Whereas he was ordered to maintain only a mobile cavalry force on the frontier with the Boer republics (Transvaal and Orange Free State), Baden-Powell amassed stores, established a garrison, and deactivated half his force to remain surrounded in Mafeking by a Boer army of at times 8,000 men, against his two thousand.

Baden-Powell had sufficient forces to escape throughout much of the siege, especially since the Boers lacked adequate artillery, but he questionably remained in the town to the point of his intended

mounted soldiers starving to death.

Historian Thomas Pakenham had opined in an earlier book *The Boer War* (1979), that Baden-Powell sacrificed the lives of the native African soldiers and civilians by drastically reducing their rations. Conversely, after subsequent research over two decades, Pakenham reversed the allegation in *The Siege of Mafeking* (2001), but in which he distressingly stated that Baden-Powell's "failure to properly understand the situation and abandonment of the soldiers, mostly Australians and Rhodesians, at the Battle of Elands River led to his being removed from action".

Another more serious breach of protocol landed him in further trouble. Baden Powell judged and executed prisoner of war, the African Chief Uwini of the 1896 Matabeleland rebellion, who had surrendered in response to a pledge that his life would be spared. BP was later cleared by an inquiry conducted by his victorious country.

At Mafeking, Baden-Powell had witnessed his Chief Staff Officer, Lord Edward Cecil forming the Mafeking Cadet Corps of white boys below fighting age (12 to 15 years old), who stood guard, carried messages, assisted in hospitals, and released the men to fight, wrote David C Scott in *The Siege of Mafeking* (2008), a fact duly acknowledged by Baden-Powell in his *Scouting for Boys* (1908). The cadets' phenomenon inspired Lt General Baden-Powell to organise an experimental camp at Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Dorset, in August 1907 for UK boys to benefit from the Mafeking sort of activities. The Boy Scouts movement was born. Three years later his younger sister Agnes initiated the Girls Guides movement.

Baden-Powell or BP, as he is lovingly known to over 54 million active Scouts and Girl Guides, and millions others in 216 countries and territories, dedicated his post-military life 1910 onwards to the development of young people as responsible, supportive and dutiful citizens of their country and the world through achieving

their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual potentials as individuals.

Baden-Powell was among the few brave ex-soldiers to admit as early as 1908 about (British) colonies, "... in the past many mistakes have been made... The first consideration now is, how can we best help the peoples—whatever their colours...". BP instituted the "worldwide brotherhood" of Scouts within a decade of the Mafeking "racial" allegations, declaring that a scout is "a friend of all the world". It is therefore hard

in London, and was invited to meet Adolf Hitler, which did not transpire. Wrote BP: "... true peace between the two nations (Britain and Germany) will depend on the youth being brought up on friendly terms together in forgetfulness of past differences". BP noted in his diary (1939): *Mein Kampf* was "a wonderful book, with good ideas on education, health, propaganda, organisation, etc.," written years before Hitler showed his brutal Nazi colours.

Perhaps it was naïve of Baden-Powell to

1934). Hitler Youth were a compulsory Nazi formation, which had consciously sought to breed hate, treachery and cruelty into the mind and soul of every German child.

BP's biographer Tim Jeal said any admiration for the Nazi leader's autobiographical manifesto *Mein Kampf* was confined to their shared ideas about boys' education, and outward bound life, and not Hitler's hatred of Jews, which became pronounced much later.

Three decades earlier, BP had written, "Scouts from all parts of the world are ambassadors of goodwill, making friends, breaking down barriers of colour, of creed, and of class". He must have meant it to include the German youth. Was it BP's lion heart talking in 1937 because of the Scouting principles he laid out, "promoting friendship among all"?

BP was never in the Nazi good book, and would have been killed among 2,800 others "in the event of a successful invasion of Britain", as outlined in the Nazi's 1940 plan. Inclusion in the list of Nazi targets exonerates BP from supposed Nazi fraternising.

Gifted with the flair to stimulate the imagination of the young, BP cast them challenges of camping, hiking, trekking, discovering nature, and working in small groups to pick up lifesaving leadership skills. Committed to inclusion of all and valuing the diversity of nations, BP promoted camaraderie, tolerance and global solidarity. Young and old of every creed, colour, country, community and class adopted Scouting as a means of involving youth towards "creating a better world".

The man's character is enshrined in the Scout promise and law that has lasted now over a century and a dozen years: "... to do our duty to Allah and our country, to help others at all times, to obey the Scout Law. The spark of Baden-Powell ignited passion across the face of the earth.



A statue of Robert Baden-Powell is seen in Poole, Britain, on June 11, 2020.

PHOTO: PETER NICHOLLS/AFP

to imagine that Baden-Powell was driven by the vile of racism.

BLM activists further claim that Baden-Powell was "enthusiastic about Nazism, and an admirer of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*, 1925) and the Hitler Youth movement", an inference possibly deducible from BP's 1937 letter, after he held talks with the head of the Hitler Youth movement

stretch the hand of friendship because since Hitler's appointment as chancellor (1933), the Nazis were operating concentration camps to incarcerate and intimidate anti-Nazi political, social, and cultural leaders. Simultaneously, Hitler Youth's proclamation that it alone represented German youth led to the Scout Movement being prohibited as young enemies of the new state (May

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# Has Trump found a solution to America's Afghan problem?

**SAYEED AHMED**

America's recent peace agreement with the Taliban in Doha makes many ponder whether it has lost the war. However, before coming to such a conclusion, we should revisit the aims of this decades-old bloody conflict.

According to President Bush Jr, its mission was "to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime." But the Taliban are still a formidable foe, and terrorists have spread to far-flung countries. By signing the agreement with the Taliban, sidelining the elected government of Afghanistan, the US has only accepted its legitimacy, abandoning the mission President Bush stated at the outset.

One particular aspect of this war is unmissable; it's nearly impossible to plan and mobilise such a large-scale military mission thousands of miles away in less than a month.

What was the aim of the war then, and is the peace agreement just a change of tactic to achieve it? To find an answer, we must go back many years.

**'The Geographical Pivot of History'—the Heartland Theory**

In 1904, British geographer Halford Mackinder proposed a theory—which he called the "Heartland" theory—in a paper titled "The Geographical Pivot of History." The essence of this theory is that Eurasia is the global pivot point, and whoever controls the Eurasian continent—the "Heartland"—can exercise global dominance. Today, the Heartland consists of Russia, the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia, and the Caspian basin. Russia has long been the de

facto controlling power of this region.

The new player in this game is China, as it's projecting its influence through land routes in Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US adopted a policy of expanding in this region, made explicit

in a Pentagon document in early 1992. It stated that the first objective of the US was to prevent any rival power dominating this region, and it would preclude the emergence of any potential future global competitor.

In February the same year, the USAID prepared a report titled "Mineral Resources in Afghanistan," providing a comprehensive

picture of the vast amounts of oil, gas, rare earth elements, and other minerals. It made Afghanistan an integral part of America's Eurasia policy.

Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski, the US National Security Advisor from 1977 to 1981, contributed further to the Pentagon policy through his seminal work "The Grand

Chessboard (1997)". In it, he said: "The most immediate task is to make certain that no state or combination of states gains the capacity to expel the United States from Eurasia or even to diminish significantly its decisive arbitrating role."

Securing Afghanistan was, therefore, crucial, and the 9/11 incident was a God-

send opportunity.

By 2010, the Afghan war had been dragging on for a decade but made little discernable progress. The Taliban were steadily getting stronger. Al Qaeda was still present and had since spread to several other countries.

In June that year, in an apparent bid to buy more time for the war, the Pentagon reported the "discovery" of nearly USD 1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan. But despite continued efforts until 2016, the situation didn't improve much. Afghanistan became a blaring case of American foreign policy failure.

**'To the victor belong the spoils'**

In January 2017, Donald Trump took over as America's 45th president. In the same month, he declared at the CIA headquarters: "To the victor belong the spoils." But picking up the spoils of the Afghan War was a dangerous and costly endeavour as most mine sites were still under Taliban control, and security remained ever elusive.

Trump, the businessman, was on the search for a cost-effective way to guard the mines and carry the ores to the ports.

**'Prince' to the rescue**

Remember Erik D Prince of the private security firm Blackwater International, that gained notoriety in Iraq? Prince is now in the Afghanistan arena, promoting a new idea that could enable the US to reduce its troops and, at the same time, ensure the security of the mine sites and transport of the minerals outside the country. How? By privatising the war.

Since the Blackwater saga in Iraq, Prince had moved on to set up Frontier Services Group Ltd (FSG) in Hong Kong. For Afghanistan, he has proposed a smaller active

presence of US forces, combined with some 20,000 private contractors, supported by air through a fleet of contracted aircraft flown by joint teams of Afghans and contractors. Prince says—based on his previous experience in Iraq, UAE, and Pakistan—the plan won't cost tens of billions of dollars on a large number of troops but would be adequate to ensure security at the mine sites. Once the minerals are outside Afghanistan, it would pay off all the costs the Americans have incurred so far, several times over.

Trump may find Prince's idea too hard to resist.

**The human cost**

Meanwhile, the human cost of the war is rising, as a study by Brown University in October 2019 indicates. Crossfire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), assassinations, bombings, night raids into houses of suspected insurgents, and American cluster bombs—all are killing civilians in disproportionate numbers. Poverty, violence, insecure infrastructure, malnutrition, poor sanitation, lack of access to healthcare, environmental degradation all are contributing to premature death. A rough estimate puts the total number of war deaths to 157,000 since 2001. Of this, more than 43,000 are civilians.

As I write this, President Donald Trump has imposed sanctions on the court officials who are investigating the alleged war crimes of US forces in Afghanistan. It could lead to a repeat of the chaos and anarchy of Iraq, and the resource curse of Congo, combined. The Doha agreement is an ominous sign that mercenaries may conduct the war, and Afghanistan will bleed for many more years.

Sayed Ahmed is a consulting engineer with experience in infrastructure project management in South Asia.



A US military Chinook helicopter in Afghanistan in 2019.

PHOTO: AFP

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**DESMOND TUTU**  
 (Born 1931)  
 South African archbishop

*My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Dollop
- 5 Football team
- 10 "Damn Yankees" role
- 11 Singer Twain
- 12 Historic times
- 13 Golf's Palmer
- 14 Like a well-read page in a book
- 16 Wizarding school
- 20 Secant's reciprocal
- 23 Needle feature
- 24 Give an address
- 25 Congo's former name
- 27 Roadhouse
- 28 Like losing wrestlers
- 29 Unable to see in

**DOWN**

- 1 Delighted
- 2 Company symbol
- 3 Designer Cassini
- 4 Batter's goal
- 5 Smallest mammal
- 6 Lecture follower
- 7 First numero
- 8 Suffer
- 9 June honoree
- 11 Private's boss
- 15 Top-notch
- 17 Horse strap
- 18 Brit's spare
- 19 Canary snack
- 20 Hairstyle
- 21 Yes - (answer choice)
- 22 Warbled
- 25 Brass ingredient
- 26 Moderate tempo
- 28 Sound of Washington
- 30 Wild party
- 31 Seeps
- 33 Money for release
- 34 Midmonth day
- 35 Pathfinder launcher
- 36 Bill dispenser
- 37 Arthur of TV
- 38 - Palmas

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**BEETLE BAILEY**

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

SAGS, CLOUT, MATH, ALAMO, DECRY, NOW, ONETIME, TWOSTAR, OAR, SLEET, INN, CRABS, GAT, SALSA, ARM, THREERS, FOURWAY, DIE, TOSEA, OFUSE, EVENS, NICER, REST, NTENS

**BY MORT WALKER**

WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR NIGHTSTAND? THEY WERE SHOOTING A TV SHOW AT THE DINER IN TOWN. GREG & MORT WALKER. GUY FIERI AUTOGRAPHED A BAGEL FOR ME.

**BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT**

LET'S JUST PUT MOM'S PHONE BACK AND HOPE SHE DOESN'T NOTICE THE CRACKED SCREEN. BUT WHAT IF SHE DOES? WHATEVER HAPPENS, JUST ACT INNOCENT. INNOCENT. OHAY. GOT IT. MY PHONE!!! WE DID IT! PUNISH US! WAAAAA!