

LETTERS



AND E-MAILS

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Whitehall's pessimism will not help Afghanistan

I SHARE Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith's short-term analysis of the situation in Helmand (War on Taliban cannot be won, says army chief, World News, last week) given the fierce tribal and ethnic loyalties at play, but not the official Whitehall pessimism that has sanctioned his comments. I have worked among the mujaheddin on the North West Frontier with British forces in Helmand this year

and recently returned from a professional visit to India. Until recently, modern communications have been all but unknown outside the principal Afghan towns. Anyone who has witnessed the extraordinary creativity and cultural energy now emanating from the various "Olywoods" in India will appreciate that it is only a matter of time, albeit years and decades rather than months, before the satellite-borne

digital wave of cultural modernisation and social enlightenment sweeps up from the Punjab and across the Khyber and purges the fundamentalism that blights the lives of the people of the Pashtun border provinces. With our cultural, linguistic and historic links to the subcontinent, and a patient, far-sighted, even-handed and supportive approach to dealings with Pakistan and India in the coming years, I suggest the Great Game is all but in the bag.

David Rew
Consultant General Surgeon
Southampton University
Hospitals

Political stalemate

At last it's dawning on the military that the Afghans cannot be beaten by force, nor do we have any reason to attempt to beat them. We may not like their form of government, but that puts them in the same boat as most of the rest of the world — and for sure they don't like ours.

Clement Hall
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

Tragic history lesson

In the 1980s the Russians lost thousands of young lives in Afghanistan. Why do you need to step on the same rake?

Valery Bogan
Moscow



American's drink lecture is hard to swallow

IF Sarah Lyall (Let's put the drink down and just talk, News Review, last week) were really qualified to write A Field Guide to the British she would know we already have enough of our countrymen giving us lectures on the perils of drinking, as well as smoking, eating, driving and almost every other pursuit that ends with "ing" (except perhaps cycling).

Her irritating, supercilious, schoolma'am-like tone dissuaded me from reading the rest of the lecture and, besides, I'd split my sixth pint of

Guinness over it. I wonder how, say, The Washington Post would react if I asked it to devote half a page to an article by somebody most people had never heard of dedicated to the perils of its countrymen eating too many Big Macs.

May I suggest Lyall returns to her own country to write about its more relaxed approach to carrying guns and slaying its citizens with them. Although I suggest, to use her words, it will be hard for the public to change its attitude over there when many of the

people it admires spend so much time using them.

Les Golden
Allestree, Derbyshire

Hard-earned pints

Nothing wrong with having a drink as long as you don't upset or attack anyone. The lads I know graft hard all week in monotonous but essential jobs, and so the reward at the weekend is beer and football.

Some choose rifles and religion, but that's not for me.
J Whiteside
Lytham, Lancashire