

**BRITISH CONCEPTS OF INDIA'S  
NORTHERN FRONTIER PROBLEMS**

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**A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Philosophy  
of the Jawaharlal Nehru University**

**NEW DELHI**

**1973**

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## PREFACE

This study seeks to examine British concepts of India's Northern Frontier problems.

The present essay is divided into eight parts. The first chapter introduces the geographic and strategic aspects of British Indian Empire.

The second chapter examines the importance of India in British Imperial system, and the amount of autonomy exercised by the Government of India in the field of foreign policy.

The third chapter discusses the various origins of Russophobia, namely, strategic, psychological, economic and political.

The fourth chapter deals with Russian military and diplomatic plans threatening the security of India.

The fifth chapter examines the power politics of Indian counter-offensive measures.

The sixth chapter deals with the containment of Russian influence in Central Asia. It discusses the way the resolution of Panir Crisis brought about a change in Anglo-Russian rivalry.

The seventh chapter discusses the buffer state power politics in Afghanistan.

The last section summarises the conclusions of this study.

I have been helped by various persons in the course of this work. I am thankful to Dr. Satish Kumar who supervised this work. I am grateful to Prof. Sisir Gupta for his various constructive suggestions at every stage of this work. I am indebted to Dr. Pushpesh Pant for his kind suggestions and helpful advice generously given to me in preparing this dissertation.

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March<sup>5</sup>  
February ' , 1973.

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

British conflict with European powers provided for the first time in the history of India, a geographical and strategic framework for an Indian foreign policy. None of the previous rulers of Indian subcontinent had an overall global strategic framework to follow in their contacts with the outside world. Indian historical thinking was to a large extent confined to the growth and decline of local dynasties with the result that the overall geographical factors which shaped our life and determined our political power seldom entered into our calculations. On account of our lack of understanding of geography in relation to national life, unlike China and Persia,<sup>1</sup> India never had a foreign policy till the British established their authority over it. Thus the political elite in India, formerly of British in origin, became for the first time, geographically conscious. British Government of India's concept of Indian national interest coincided with the contemporary Indian ruling elite's concept of Indian national interest, especially in the sphere of foreign policy. The policies of the present Government of India are inevitably conditioned by the engagements and interests of the past hundred years or so.<sup>2</sup>

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1 K.M. Panikkar, Geographical Factors in Indian History (Bombay, 1969), pp. ix-x.

2 Bishoshwar Prasad, Our Foreign Policy Legacy: A Study of British Indian Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1965), pp. vii-viii.

~~is~~ <sup>was</sup>

Geopolitical particularity ~~is~~ the major factor Indianizing all foreign conquerors of Indian subcontinent. Though large portions of Northern India were conquered many times by foreigners, India was never in the past ruled by a monarch who did not have his capital in India. The Kushans, the Huns, the Turks and the Koghuls conquered many portions of Northern India, but their empire was in India. Buddhist Kaniska ruled from Peshawar but his successor in the third generation became Hindu Vasudeva. The Huns, Mihirgula and Toramana, came from foreign lands, but even when they oppressed the country and pillaged the people, they became Indians with no interests outside the Indian subcontinent. The Khalifs and the Mughals have been absorbed in the population of India. The Mughuls, once they settled in Agra, lost their contacts with Central Asia and became a "national monarchy".<sup>3</sup> The Indianization of British Empire made India "the base and bastion",<sup>4</sup> "the brightest jewel of the Crown", and "the fundamental pillar and base" of the British colonial system.

Imperial Britain's strategic interests were basically twofold, the expansion of commerce and the protection of the empire. Acquisition of new territories and extension of spheres of influence followed from these, but the economic motive was

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3 K.M. Panikkar, n. 1, pp. 88-89.

4 Devendra Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), pp. 96-114.



perhaps more dominant.<sup>5</sup> With the consolidation of imperial political power and its growth within the colony's natural boundaries, imperial power considered that its future security and protection of its empire depended on the development of the most important and potentially most powerful colony as an advanced strategic base "to acquire more military bases or economic colonies abroad." When British dominion had reached the natural frontiers of India in the north-west, north or east, in 1857, its policy was naturally directed towards creating a belt of "states under their influence or domination" whose economic and military bases might be exploited for India's own end.<sup>6</sup>

On the last day of the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth I incorporated by a royal charter "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, trading into the East Indies." By 1793, the company had won territory in Bengal as far north as the twenty seventh degree latitude. Forty years later, by proceeding northwestward along the edge of the Himalayas, its frontiers crossed latitude 31° and came into contact with the Sikh Kingdom, which the formidable Ranjit Singh had created north of Sutlej. The final collapse of what was left of that kingdom, and the subsequent annexation of the

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5 Prasad, n. 2, pp. 1-22.

6 Bisheshwar Prasad, The Foundations of India's Foreign Policy (1860-1892), (New Delhi, 1967), pp. 253-253.

Panjab in 1849, brought the direct rule of the British to the north of Peshwar. Indirectly, the British influence reached across the dependent territories of the Maharaja Gulab Singh as far as the Karakoram Pass.<sup>7</sup> In 1805, British rule in India extended only in U.P., Bihar, Cuttack, Carnatic and Cochin Malabar etc. Sikhs, Marathas, Rajputs, Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore were independent in 1805. Thus there was no British control over the subcontinent's Arabian Sea Coastlands. But the entire subcontinent's Bay of Bengal coastland was under British hegemony in 1803.<sup>8</sup> Only after 1857, the entire India came under British hegemony and the British controlled both eastern and western coastlands of India. It was after 1857 that the British reached the natural frontiers of India in north-west. Therefore, before 1810 the foreign policy of Government of India was primarily directed towards north east Asia and China. Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Sinkiang came into prominence only when British power had been consolidated in India by 1857. It should be also noted here that Suez Canal was commissioned in 1869 and direct telegraphic contact between India and England inaugurated in the same decade. Thus we are in a position to evaluate British

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<sup>7</sup> G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontiers 1865-95 (London, 1963), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> E.H. Hallett, A Short History of India (Colbourne, 1959), p. 135.

concepts of India's northern frontier problems in terms of the geographic extension of British rule in India.

The driving motive force for creating an Indian sphere of influence was provided by the fear and jealousy of rival European imperialisms, which were similarly engaged in establishing their dominions in Asia. France in the east, and Russia in the north, were developing their empires, and their rapidly expanding boundaries were converging towards Indian frontiers. To preserve the territorial integrity of the British empire in India and to maintain its security against the rival European powers, threat of aggression, came to be one of the basic elements of the foreign policy of the Government of India. It provided the primary incentive for contact with the neighbouring oriental states and continued to be the determining factor of British Indian foreign policy throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> In the fulfilment of these objectives, the Government of India was brought into conflict, at an early date with other competing imperialisms of Europe, namely, Russia, France, Ottoman Empire, and Germany.

Lord Curzon was the personification of the idea of the British power in India, as the great empire shedding its greatness and glory in the neighbouring states. As Viceroy, he pictured himself as the Grand Moghul running an imperial policy of his own. For him, India was the centre of the world

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<sup>9</sup> Bisheshwar Prasad, n. 6, p. 251.

around which everything revolved. He tried to increase the influence of the Indian government in Afghanistan, Nepal and Persian Gulf, and generally claimed for India a position of importance in South Asian affairs as if it were an independent country.<sup>10</sup>

Indian Empire at that time was a "continental order", not an maritime order, and, it was a political structure based on India and extending its authority from Aden to Hong Kong.<sup>11</sup> Lord Mavell argued till the end of Second World War that "India's frontiers lie on the Suez Canal and in Hong Kong."<sup>12</sup> Spread of Indian Empire was the result of Indo-British partnership, an alliance between the emigrants of the British middle class and of Indian subordinates which they had organised. "India could not have established the Empire without Great Britain, nor could Great Britain without India. All the principal actors who conceived the expansionist policies were British, but the Empire which they built was based on Indian, not British, needs."<sup>13</sup> Except for the sake of Indian security, Great Britain had no interest in Afghanistan, Burma, Central Asia,

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10 K.M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1948 (London, 1965), pp. 111-120.

11 Ibid., p. 126.

12 Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Selected Speeches of Subhas Chander Bose (Delhi, 1962), pp. 127-131.

13 Guy Mint, British in Asia, pp. 20-30.

Ceylon, Tibet or Sinkiang, in all of whose affairs it began to intervene. Indian emigrants, not British, swarmed into new provinces and, while British capital built the railways, mines, plantation and new industries, Indian monolander acquired the land. "The fact that in their activities in Asia, the British were in part doing India's business and acting as servants of the Emperor of India rather than of the King of England explains much about the past and present of the Empire which is otherwise obscure."<sup>14</sup> These states from Aden to Burma were the bullworks of the safety of India, and in their protection from alien domination lay her security also. The identity was fully established before the end of the last century and India's foreign policy was based on that principle.<sup>15</sup>

"The Indian Empire is to be thought of as consisting of a kernel which was the rich lands directly administered and of a protective rind; this rind was made up partly of minor and more or less primitive States, such as Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal and partly of mountain and desert territories, inhabited by people tribally organized."<sup>16</sup> Government of India exercised a control over this belt of influenced states, whose common purpose was to prevent or restrict their relations with other countries, to ensure that they could not be used by other competing European powers for hostile purposes, and to exploit

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14 Ibid., p. 21.

15 Bisheshwar Prasad, n. 2, pp. 20-22.

16 Guy Wint, n. 11, pp. 21-22.

their economic resources and military bases for its own ends. The policy of buffer states around India was primarily to further Indian national interests. British national interests increasingly assumed a secondary importance in the execution of Indian frontier policy.

Great Britain merely inherited an ancient South Asian political, cultural and the geo-political legacy, by encouraging the expansion of Indian Empire from Suez Canal to Hong Kong. "The impact of the expansion of Indian culture during the Gupta golden age was felt far beyond Indian subcontinent. In South east Asia, Indian civilization abutted upon a region where no pre-existing culture offered much competition."<sup>17</sup> Westerners have underestimated the magnitude of Indian socio-economic and cultural movement which affected their own past in disguised and limited way. The expansion of Indian civilization to south-east Asia and its impact on Chinese, Korean and Japanese styles of life imbued the civilization of more than half the human race with a common tint. In so far as Asia has any community of cultural tradition uniting the Indians with the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan, Central Asian, Turkostani, Malaysian, Indonesian, Burmese and Ceylonese peoples, it is due to the contagion of ancient Indian civilization,

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17 William H. McNeill, Rise of the West: The History of the Human Community, (Chicago, 1963), pp. 363-370.

especially in its religious manifestation.<sup>18</sup> England like Guptas brought the region within their influence. As the Indian cultural sphere expanded northward along the coastal plain of Indo-China (comprising North & South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia - traditionally known as the Annam Region), the frontiers of Indian and Chinese civilizations met for the first time.<sup>19</sup> Annam continued to be the dividing line between the British and French dominions. When the British consolidated their stronghold on India, at the same time France brought Indo-China and South China within the French sphere of influence. Before the European arrival in Indian Ocean, the geographical land mass extending from the Strait of Aden to the Strait of Malacca had already been amalgamated into a single <sup>strategic</sup> ~~cultural~~ region.

The England looked upon India as the keystone of the imperial arch.<sup>20</sup> Much of the British-Indian Empire was round the Indian Ocean. With the exception of Madagascar and Reunion, Mozambique, French and former Italian Somaliland, Eritrea, Berberia, a thin wedge of Thailand north of Malaya, Indonesia and a few French and Portuguese settlements, the whole coastline and all the islands were parts of the British-Indian Empire. British-Indian Empire around Indian Ocean formed an geographical arc. Indian Ocean seemed to be encircled by an "Indian Arc" and which

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18 William H. McNeill, A World History (New York, 1967), pp. 173-187.

19 Ibid., pp. 370-380.

20 Correlli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1970), p. 77.

Englishmen used to call 'British Arc'. The whole coastline around the Indian Ocean may geopolitically be defined as "Arc Land". "The geographical and strategic keystone of this arch, was the subcontinent of India."<sup>21</sup> India occupies a prominent position in the Indian Ocean with the Deccan Peninsula jutting right into its heart. Consequently the course of events in this Ocean have had a tremendous impact on India in the past<sup>22</sup> and vice versa.

Security of Indian Empire was based on three fundamental geostrategic concepts. Firstly, no other great power should be able to establish on the Indian Ocean military and economic bases having secure land and sea communications with its own main base. Secondly, British Sea, land power must have dominant control of the naval gateways into the Indian Ocean. Thirdly, a military strategic reserve for the defence of India itself and of any parts of the Indian Ocean lands where British and Indian interests might be threatened, must be maintained in India, "the geographical keystone of the whole region."<sup>23</sup>

Of the great oceans of the world, the Indian Ocean is alone an "embayed ocean". For the most part its area is walled off on three sides, with the southern side of Asia forming a

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21 Brigadier D.H. Cole, Imperial Military Geography: The Geographical Background of the Defence of the British Commonwealth, (London, 1953), pp. 1-6, 21-34, 101-83, 205-12, 300-17.

22 Admiral A.K. Chatterji, "The Indian Ocean", The Chanakya Defence Annual 1972 (Allahabad, 1972), pp. 16-30.

23 Brigadier D.H. Cole, n. 21, pp. 159-160.



roof over it. The continent of Africa constitutes the "western wall of the Indian Ocean", while Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and Australia constitute the "eastern wall of the Indian Ocean".<sup>24</sup> A striking feature of the lands which form the fringe of the Indian Ocean is the degree of geostrategic insularity afforded to them by physical, climatic and topographical barriers. The "corridor of eastern coast of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to Sudan and Egypt, is backed on the west by deserts or tropical jungles. The coastal area of the Arab states is separated from the rest of Asia by the Arabian desert. Sahara desert completely separates the eastern coasts of Africa from the Mediterranean coastlands of North Africa.

From Anatolia to Siam a "mountain wall" divides the Indian Ocean lands - Iraq, Persia, part of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Burma, from the neighbouring countries to the north - Russia and China.<sup>25</sup> This wall, made by the mountains of Anatolia, the Elburz mountains, the Hindu Kush, the Pamirs, Karakoram, the Great Himalayas and the mountain frontier of Burma is further strengthened by a chain of deserts/rivers - the Syrian desert, the great Salt desert of Persia, the Karakoram desert of Turkestan, the desert of South Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and the deep gorges and rapid streams of the

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24 K. V. Panikkar, n. 1, pp. 72-89.

25 Brigadier D.H. Cole, n. 21, pp. 160-72.

Brahmaputra and Mekong rivers. "This almost continuous mountain wall, beyond which are Russia and China, may reasonably be described as the northern land frontier of the Indian Ocean" coastlands.<sup>26</sup> This mountain wall provides the geostrategically secure northern frontier to the "Arcland" region.<sup>27</sup> It provides a necessary geopolitical insularity and inaccessibility to withstand the imperial thrusts of the Heartland power of Euro-Asia, namely, Russia. It formed the geostrategic base of Indian foreign policy in Central Asia. This geographic insularity of the Indian coastland region determined British North Indian frontier policies. The main purpose was to create buffer states in these regions so as to avoid direct Anglo-Russian contact in the northern Indian frontier regions. The policy was designed to reinforce, politically and diplomatically, the geographical insularity of Southern Asia from Central Asia. It was also an attempt to discourage all means of political, economic as well as social communication and intermixing between regions across the "Asian Mountain Wall."

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26 Brigadier D.H. Cole, n. 21, pp. 161-63.

27 Arcland is the term defined<sup>as</sup> Indian Ocean coastland region. See p.10.

**CHAPTER II**

**INDIAN PRIMACY IN BRITISH EMPIRE**

## CHAPTER II

### INDIAN PRIMACY IN BRITISH EMPIRE

Great Britain considered India as "the real prize of the coloured empire."<sup>1</sup> "As long as we rule India", wrote Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, "we are the greatest power in the world." "If we lose it, we shall drop straightway to a third rate power."<sup>2</sup> "India had exercised a colossal influence, perhaps the greatest single influence, on British policy since the beginning of nineteenth century."<sup>3</sup> It had changed England from a maritime power into a great continental power, with a frontier of thousands of miles to defend, of which north western Indian frontier was a military frontier in the state of perpetual readiness. In the nineteenth century possession of India had made England, an island off the north-western coast of Europe, "the greatest power in the East" - greater than the moribund Chinese Empire, and only challenged, in the early 1900's by the rise of Japan.<sup>4</sup> Because of India, British foreign policy had to concern itself with Tibet, Siam, Afghanistan and Persia as well as the low countries. It was because of India that England and Russia became direct antagonists in the late nineteenth century, as

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1 Nichol's Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience (London, 1969), p. 256.

2 Quoted by N. Mansergh, n. 1, p. 256.

3 Corrolli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972), pp. 1-17, 69-235.

4 Ibid., p. 76.

Russian expansion and colonisation reached south-east towards Afghanistan and Kashmir.<sup>5</sup>

Yet England, unlike Germany for example, existed as a great land power half of the world away from the homeland. Therefore a vast fabric of secondary involvement had grown "to secure the routes to India." The British Empire in the southern, central and eastern Africa had evolved out of the original seizure of Cape Colony from the Dutch during the Napoleonic wars in order to safeguard the Atlantic passage and the continuous need to preserve this British control of the Cape.<sup>6</sup>

The need to safeguard the short route to India via Suez had made England by 1914 into a major Mediterranean and Middle Eastern as well as an Asiatic power, and after the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, into the greatest Middle-Eastern power.<sup>7</sup>

Indian soldiers had loomed large in the British notions of India from Clive and his British troops and Sepoys at Plassey in 1757, and the young Wellesley's triumph at Assaye to those stirring and colourful battles of the Victorian age that had completed the conquest of India. Indian army seemed a splendid

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5 Ibid., pp. 71-79.

6 Ibid., pp. 75-77.

7 Ibid., p. 77.

aspect. Hearts warmed at the sight of those dusky lancers, gaudy as jungle birds, who trotted beside the viceregal carriage, and at the thought of "British and Indian brothers in arms" with mule and mountain-gun carrying peace up the valleys of the North-West frontier.<sup>8</sup> The squeal of the bugle, the crunch of iron-shod ammunition boots on the dusty road, red-coats and khaki turban and topee, tents under a sky of brass - it was in these terms that the British tended to see the power which they believed India gave them.

In the First World War India raised 1,460,437 soldiers, all volunteers. Out of the total British Imperial forces of 9,586,000 men, the British Isle contributed 5,704,416 men; Canada 620,964; Australia 412,953; South Africa 136,070; New Zealand 128,525; and other colonies 134,202.<sup>9</sup> Of the Indian total, 877,069 were combatants, and 621,229 officers and men were sent overseas.<sup>10</sup> About 69,335 Indian officers and men valiantly fought on the decisive front in France and in the battles with England's principle enemy, Germany. The remainder of India's expeditionary forces were employed in the Middle East.<sup>11</sup> Lloyd George expressed the gratitude of his countrymen when he

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8 Ibid., pp. 78-79.

9 Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War (London, 1922), p. 756.

10 Ibid., p. 777.

11 Corrolli Barnett, n. 3, pp. 69-70.

said in 1921: "No Britisher can ever forget the gallantry and promptitude with which India sprang forward to the King Emperor's service when war was declared. The causes of the war were unknown to India; its theatre in Europe remote. Yet India stood by her allegiance heart and soul, from the first call to arms."<sup>13</sup>

Strategically the Indian subcontinent, the arc of Indian Ocean Empire, developed into the great military, political and economic base, for the further consolidation and expansion of British, and Indian, commerce and empire. It increased the importance of India considerably in the British colonial system. India, with her vast area, enormous material resources and population, became at once "the base and bastion" of the imperial power in the whole of Afro-Asia-Australia.<sup>14</sup> The imperial power used India as a "springboard" for further colonial conquests.<sup>15</sup> Indian Army fought aggressive wars in the interest of British imperialism in the Sudan, Egypt, Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Nepal, Burma, and China etc., and Government of India bore the costs of these operations. The Government of India maintained and bore the cost for the maintenance of India Office, the colonial establishments at Aden and other ports on the Red Sea, the Consulates in China, and the Embassy in Persia.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Quoted by Correlli Barnett, pp. 70-81.

14 Devendra Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), pp. 96-129.

15 Ibid., pp. 96-114.

16 Ibid., pp. 96-99.

For example, a British Counsel was appointed and financed by the Bombay Government, and Zangibar was regarded merely as an outpost of India.<sup>17</sup> Similar examples may be multiplied.

"Indian interests formed an important part of British imperial considerations, and the problem of strengthening Indian frontiers against the influence of European powers became in the later nineteenth century a dominant factor in imperial policy."<sup>18</sup>

The complete exclusion of the French Navy from the Indian Ocean following the withdrawal of Admiral Suffren gave to the British at the end of the eighteenth century a superiority of strength which was sufficient to give them a dominant influence with the lesser states of West Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia.<sup>19</sup> When the Napoleonic wars had forced Holland into an alliance with the French, the British Government was able to utilize its position in India for pursuing an aggressive policy in the East. "From India a policy of imperial expansion was planned, and the British Government of India was set on the perilous road of conquest and annexation in the East."<sup>20</sup>

Government of India bore all the expenses of these military operations. Malacca was originally taken in 1795 and again in 1807. Java was conquered from Dutch but returned to them after

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17 J.S. Langat, The History of the Asians in East Africa (Oxford), 1.

18 D.P. Singhal, India and Afghanistan, 1876-1907 (Colbourne, 1963), pp. x-xi.

19 K.V. Pannikar, n. 3, pp. 73-92. Asia and Western Dominance (London, 1965), pp. 73-92.

20 Ibid., p. 82.



the treaty of Vienna. These were only the beginnings. "It was only after 1818, after the Maratha power had been finally crushed, that the British authorities in India began to look upon themselves as an empire on the march."<sup>21</sup> The role of the Government of India in the expansion of British influence in East was almost exclusive as the Suez Canal was opened to traffic only in 1869. Before this the Her Majesty Government could not directly supervise the operations in the East.

Lord Hastings encouraged T.S. Raffles to acquire from the Sultan of Johore the island of Singapore for the East India Company. The purpose was to ensure the safety of the China ships of East India Company. Singapore outflanks the straits of Malacca and would have secured a passage for its China ships at all times and in all circumstances. It was argued that "what Malta is in the West, Singapore may become in the East."<sup>22</sup> Raffles argued that the position of Singapore was more commanding than even Rhio, for China trade of East India Company passing down the straits of Malacca and every native vessel that sails through the straits of Rhio must pass in sightfit.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Ibid., pp. 82-83.

22 Sir T.S. Raffles, Substance of a Minute Recorded in February 1814, (London). }

23 Sir T.S. Raffles, Memoirs on the Administration of the Easter Islands (London). }

Lady Raffles, Life and Public Services of Sir T.S. Raffles, (London). }

Britain after the Napoleonic wars, and after complete consolidation in India, had become the "colossus of the world" in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the period between 1815-40 the imperial power based in India overwhelmed all the European powers, except Russia, both in Far East and South East Asia.

With imperial naval power established as a major landpower too in South Asia, an overflow of British and Indian commercial and military interests into the Pacific was an unavoidable development. China trade had long been a one-sided affair, the European merchants buying immense quantities of silk, tea and rhubarb and selling but little. The adverse balance in the past had been adjusted by the export of bullion to China. A new method of payment was discovered in the growing popularity of opium. In 1773, Warren Hastings made the sale of opium a monopoly of the Company in India. In 1797, it assumed the monopoly of the manufacture of opium. Government of India thus came to have an immense interest in the promotion of this trade both for filling its treasures in India and as a payment for India's trade with China. In the sixteen years from 1818 to 1833 opium jumped from 17 per cent to 50 per cent of the total Indian exports to China.<sup>24</sup> The opium was sold by Government of India at public sales. Though the East India Company was not directly exporting it to China in its own ships, but in private vessels, its destination was so well known that in 1837 Government of India actually directed by public notice

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 93-107.

a large sum of money to be given as a bonus to shippers to China of the season. Committees of the House of Lords and Commons had also concluded that it was not advisable to abandon so important a source of revenue of the Government of India.<sup>25</sup>

The arrogance of Lin Tse-Hsu, the Viceroy of Hu Kuang, led to the first Opium War. The Indian troops and British navy occupied Shanghai on June 13, 1842, penetrated the great central line of China's life, the Yangtze, and the preparations were made for an assault on the great city of Nanking. There the Treaty of Nanking was signed on August 29, 1842. It opened a few ports for trade to Indian and British traders, and legalised Indian opium trade. The doctrine of the "spheres of influence" was formally recognised by Britain in 1899, she herself claiming wide and extensive authority in the entire Yangtze Valley. The "spheres of influence" for which the British and Indian merchants had been pressing for so long had at last materialised.<sup>26</sup>

China could be effectively parcelled for economic activity for political influence and for railway development, primarily because of imperial geostrategic base in India. Undoubtedly it was the India based strength of Britain, as a

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25 Memorandum of the Committee of the London East India and China Association. Quoted by K. M. Panikkar, n. 8, pp. 99-100.

26 K. M. Panikkar, n. 19, pp. 90-109.



great Asiatic War, that enabled it to force open the doors of China, establish European predominance in the Yangtze Valley, reduce the power of the Great Manchus, and help to convert the rest of Asia into an European dependency. Thus the military conquest of India which, though completed only in 1858, had given to the British an unshakable foundation by 1810, enabled the industrially revolutionised Britain in the post Napoleonic period to project her political and economic power into the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> The Government of India discovered that her status as an "Indian Empire" cost her money for all the wars in the East were debited to her account.<sup>28</sup>

Two major Asian land powers, namely, India and China, have traditionally maintained a geostrategic balance in the power configuration of Asia. Whenever either is organised whether by consent or by force as a base by an alien imperialist power, the security of the other is automatically gravely threatened. Great Britain established a monopoly of power in India and thereby established predominance in Yangtze Valley, curtailing the power of Great Manchus, and thus helping to convert China into an European sphere of influence. Great Britain reached China through India. French geostrategists attempted to completely reverse this direction of the flow of

27 Ibid., pp. 122-126.

28 Ibid., pp. 137-146.



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military and economic power between the two major Asian land powers. They planned to contain British power in India by consolidating their hold over China. The French enunciated a doctrine of "soldering". Indo-China being a French possession, the French demanded that the area adjacent to it should be soldered "to her". The great province of Yunnan was to be connected to Tonking by a railway. In 1899, Kwangchow Bay with its dependencion was taken over as a French naval base. Kuangsi, Yunnan, Kwoichow and Schochuan, in fact over one-fourth of the total area of China proper was to be "soldered" to French Indo-China. "French imagination saw a greater empire than that of British in India in the making."<sup>29</sup> The Government of India was greatly alarmed. The British and Indian merchants always looked upon South China as an privileged area of political influence and trade, a mere hinterland of Hong Kong. This shows the diplomatic relations in the East had become the responsibility of the Government of India, because of their importance for Indian interests.

India as the "central military and economic base" of an imperialist naval power proved to be the greatest geostrategic drawback in the defences of Chinese middle Kingdom, traditionally a land power. This geopolitical legacy has created a lasting impression in Chinese minds. This geopolitical lesson ~~might have~~ influenced Dullossian policy of the encirclement of China in

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29      Ibid., pp. 137-146.

1950's. Had India cooperated willingly with U.S.A., as in the past, it was forced to do with Britain, the global strategy of John Foster Dulles regarding the encirclement of China would have succeeded. United States failed, whereas Great Britain had succeeded, in the encirclement and containment of China, mainly because of the lack of geostrategic support of India. It is precisely for similar reasons that China is highly suspicious of Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation 1971. The Chinese are as suspicious of Soviet attempts of "continental land encirclement" of China, as they were of United States attempts of "coastlands and oceanic encirclement of China." In both cases, the relevance of India cannot be denied, just as it could not be denied in any scheme of British interests in this region.

It was in the economic interest of East India Company to develop India as the advance base of imperialism. East India Company being primarily interested in commerce allowed a high degree of autonomy to the Government of India with regard to foreign policy. It was cheaper to deal with Afro-Asian colonies, dependencies and protectorates from India than to govern them from London. The British Crown also followed the same policy. The foreign policy of British Indian Empire was almost the foreign policy of an independent, sovereign and imperialist nation, because this was the cheapest way to protect British trade and commerce in the entire Indian Ocean coastland.

**CHAPTER III**

**RUSSIAN THREAT TO INDIAN SECURITY - I**

## RUSSIAN THREAT TO INDIAN SECURITY - I

The Origins of Russophobia(A) Strategic

The great wars of history are the outcome, direct or indirect, of the unequal growth of nations, and that unequal growth is not wholly due to greater genius and energy of some nations as compared with others; in large measure it is the result of the uneven distribution of fertility and strategic opportunity upon the face of globe.<sup>1</sup> The entire bogey of Russophobia is the creation of chauvinist British military generals, politicians, diplomats and journalists, who constantly advocated further expansion and consolidation of British Empire, because they feared that the grouping of Russian lands and seas, natural path ways and its fertility, is such as to lend itself to the growth of Russian Empire, and in the end of a Russian world empire.

Mobility upon the sea is the natural rival of horse and camel mobility in the heart of the continent.<sup>2</sup> The all-important result of the discovery of the cape route to the India was to connect the western and eastern coastal navigations

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1 Sir Halford J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality - Study in the Politics of Reconstruction (New York, 1942), pp. 1-2.

2 Sir Halford J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History", The Geographical Journal, April 1904, No. 4, vol. XXIII, pp. 421-444.



of Euro-Asia, even though by the circuitous route, and thus in some measure to neutralize the strategic advantage of the central position of the Mongol steppes, Central Asia, and Islamic Arabs of Ottoman Empire by "pressing upon them in the rear."<sup>3</sup> The revolution, commenced by the great mariners of the Columbian generation, endowed Christendom with the widest possibly mobility of power, short of winged mobility. The broad political effect was to reverse the relation of Europe and Asia, for whereas in the Middle Ages Europe, was caged between an impassable Sahara desert to South, an unknown and unexplored Atlantic Ocean to West, a Russian icy or forested wastes to north and northeast, to east and south-east, was constantly threatened by the superior mobility of Mongol and Turkish horsemen and Arab camelmen. She now emerged upon the world, multiplying more than thirty-fold the sea surface and coastal lands to which she had access and which had hitherto threatened her very existence.<sup>4</sup> This led Admiral A.T. Mahan<sup>5</sup> and Nicholas J. Spykman<sup>6</sup> to propound that seapower will always remain invincible vis-a-vis land power.

When Napoleonic War was over, British sea-power encompassed, almost without competition, that great world promontory which

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3 H.J. Mackinder, n. 2, p. 433.

4 Ibid., n. 2, pp. 433-434.

5 Admiral A.T. Mahan, The Influence of Seapower upon History 1660-1783 (Boston, 1898)

6 Nicholas J. Spykman, America's Strategy in World Politics (Harcourt, Brace, 1942)

stands forward to the Cape of Good Hope from between Britain and Japan. It was a proud and lucrative position and seemed so secure that the mid-victorian British folk thought it almost in the natural order of things that insular Britain should rule the seas.<sup>7</sup> So impressive had been the results of British sea-power that there had perhaps been the tendency to neglect the warning of history and to regard sea-power in general as inevitably having, because of the unity of the Ocean, the last word in the rivalry with land power.<sup>8</sup>

Russophobists exaggerated Russian menace by the example of the First World War, Germany, which is also a land power. Britain had been fighting lately, in the close of the First World War, a straight duel between land-power and sea-power, and sea-power had been laying siege to land-power. Britain had conquered, but had Germany conquered she would have established her sea-power on a wider base than any in the history, and in fact on the widest possible base.<sup>9</sup> Hence <sup>they argued</sup> Russian land-power should not be underestimated.

Perhaps the most remarkable outcome of British sea-power was the position in the Indian Ocean during the generation before the First World War. The British Raj "in India depended on support from the sea, yet on all the waters between the Cape

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7 H.J. Mackinder, n. 1, pp. 56-57.

8 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

9 Ibid., pp. 62

of Good Hope, India and Amtraha, there was habitually no British battleship or even first class cruiser."<sup>10</sup> Because the Indian Ocean "was a closed sea" or "Indian lake" as British owned or protected most of the Ocean coast-lands. Russophobes argued that Russia will invade India and thus bring about a gap in the "British Imperial Arc" around Indian Ocean, and thereby deny British navy, the command of Indian Ocean. Peter the Great had said that "Bear in mind that the Commerce of India is the commerce of the world, and that he who can exclusively command it is dictator of Europe."<sup>11</sup> And thereby once Russia take over India, Britain shall drop straight-away to a third rate power.<sup>12</sup> Thus a case was built up of the insecurity and instability of the British and the invulnerability and stability of the Russian Empire in the East.<sup>13</sup>

The spaces within the Russian Empire are so vast, and their potentialities in population, wheat, cotton, fuel, and mineral resources so incalculably great, that it is inevitable that a vast industrial base and continental commerce, more or less apart, will there develop inaccessible to oceanic commerce.<sup>14</sup> The Russian heartland, the pivot region of the world politics

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10 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

11 The Will of Peter the Great, as given in Russia Against India: The Struggle for Asia by Archibald R. Colquhoun, (London, 1900), pp. 238-242.

12 Corrolli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972), p. 76.

13 Dr. Moritz Wagner, Travels in Persia, Georgia, and Koordistan, With Sketches of the Cossacks and Caucasus (London, 1856).

14 H.J. Mackinder, n. 2, p. 434.

that vast area of Euro-Asia is inaccessible to ships, thereby British sea-power cannot lay siege to heartland power. Mackinder argued that "Russia replaces the Mongol Empire."<sup>15</sup> Russia occupies the central strategic position. She can strike on all sides, all the surrounding coastland bases of Sea powers, but herself is secure from the invasion of sea power because of the inaccessibility of the central <sup>ecumene</sup> ~~oceanic~~ from sea. She can invade the coastlands, the bases of sea power, thus denying England the coastland economic and military bases.

Russophobists argued that if the Great Continent, the whole world - Island or a large part of it, were at some future time to become the unified base of a continental land power, the other insular bases, namely, Great Britain and other western maritime powers, will be outbuilt as regards ships and outmanned as regards seamen.<sup>16</sup>

These arguments were brilliantly summarised in the famous dictum of H.J. Mackinder that:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;  
 Who rules the Heartland commands the world Island;  
 Who rules the world Island commands the world.<sup>17</sup>

It is the clearest exposition of the most salient feature of British diplomacy in eighteenth century onwards, that Russophobia was the driving factor underlying British foreign policy.

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15 Ibid., p. 436.

16 Ibid., ~~n. 1~~, p. 70.

17 Ibid., p. 150.

Whether it was the issue of French influence in Persian Gulf; or the "Eastern Question" i.e. the struggle for inheriting the decaying Ottoman Empire; or German railway project in Middle East; or German eastward expansion in first and second world wars; or Napoleonic invasion of Eastern Europe and Russia; or the defences of India; or the question of buffer states in Afghanistan, Persia, Central Asia and Sinkiang; the fundamental strategic consideration of British foreign policy had been that the great land mass of Russia should not become an unified base for a rival military power.

(B) Psychological

A basic principle of geopolitics is an inherent and perpetual conflict between a land power and a sea power. Before the first world war, the land and sea powers were Russia and Britain respectively. In a way, Russophobia laid the foundations of geopolitics. A clear understanding of the influence of geography on politics had been a permanent feature of British political and military thinking and writing.

Knowledge of geography was essential to the expression of views on Russian threat. A number of readable books of travel about the middle of the nineteenth century brought the knowledge of regional geography within the reach of common

man.<sup>18</sup> From 1838 to 1878 more than forty works on travel, adventures and descriptions of Russia and Central Asia were published, many running into more than one volume.<sup>19</sup> These facilities or "rapid increase and development of mobility" was the product less of restlessness than of "growing curiosity of the world."<sup>20</sup> If the eastern parts of Central Asia were more frequently described by the English, the western areas were better explored by the Russians.<sup>21</sup> The travel accounts of reputed Russian military generals, namely, General Perozski<sup>22</sup> and General Soboleff,<sup>23</sup> show an insight into Russian military strategies in the region, which were even more referred to in the political discussions that swayed the sixties and seventies.

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- 18 J.B. Fraser, Winter's Journey (London 1978);  
 J.B. Fraser, Travels in Koordistan (London, 1940);  
 J.B. Fraser, Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia (London, 1843).  
 Capt. James Abbot, Journey from Herat to Khiva (1893);  
 Fred Burnaby, "A Ride to Khiva: Travels and Adventures in Central Asia".
- 19 Sir John MacNeill, Progress and Present Position of Russia;  
 Sir H.G. Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London, 1875);  
 Baillie Fraser, Russia (London, 1834);  
 Alexander Burnes, Travels in Bokhara, (London, 1834, 1839).
- 20 G.M. Young, Early Victorian England 1830-1865 (London, 1934), p. xiv.
- 21 Alexander Burnes, Travels into Bokhara (London, 1842), vol. ii, p. 393.
- 22 General Perozsky, Khiva (London, 1865).
- 23 General Skoboleff, Bokhara and Khokand (London, 1876).

The result of the immense Russophobic literature was that after 1835 the dislike and fear of Russia was in the minds of most Englishmen, and the responsible utterances of party leaders ranged from extreme reserve to unconcealed hostility.<sup>24</sup> The apprehension of Russian power generated at the close of Napoleonic wars reached its peaks in 1839. In the late *twenties*, Russophobia was in one of its acute forms.<sup>25</sup> The mistrust of Russian designs dominated the Central Asian thinking. It was conceived to be her design to push on to the frontiers of India as laid down by the will of Peter the Great.<sup>26</sup> In the minds of thousands, the same set of images and same reactions got deep rooted. Russia became a villain, a diabolic, clever and yet somehow easy to defeat. The average Englishmen had fixed ideas about every race, and he regarded Russians as "curanny incarnate". He therefore distrusted every Russian movement. Thus, when Gladstone examined the stories of Russian atrocities in Turkestan and decided that they had been exaggerated for party purposes or that they had been exaggerated out of hatred of any cause with which he sympathised, the ordinary

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24 C.W. Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations (1815-1907)", Cambridge Historical Journal (1929).

25 J.H. Gleason, The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain (Cambridge, 1950), p. 213.

26 The will of Peter the Great, n. 11, pp. 230-242.  
Also see Appendix 1.

Englishman wondered how the Premier could be so unpatriotic.<sup>27</sup>

Even the leftists and radicals, namely, Karl Marx, Frederick Harrison, H.M. Hyndman, and Joseph Cowan, were inflexibly opposed to any compromise with Russia, believing that every diplomatic or military defeat suffered by Tsar would hasten the course of the progressive movement throughout the world. Karl Marx noted that the growing opposition of the (English) workers to Russia was prompted not by jingoism but by the British public's traditional and healthy opposition to Tsarism.<sup>28</sup> These led to the creation of organisations like, "The National Society for Resistance to Russian Aggression and Protection of British interests."<sup>29</sup> The phobia of Russian heartland threat was such that even the large number of them whose interest in Indian affairs was so vague that they would not be able to say in which hemisphere India was situated, and what 'Central Asia (as a geographical expression conveyed, showed real anxiety on the point.<sup>30</sup> No wonder people in Britain were worried, frightened as they were by Russian invasion schemes, fed with false information, deceived by geographical ignorance and forgetful of the vast distances of the mountain, desert and

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- 27 W.E. Gladstone, "Russian Policy and Deeds in Turkistan", The Contemporary Review, vol. 28 (November 1876), p. 873.
- 28 E.P. Thompson, "William Morris" (London, 1955), p. 246, p. 262.
- 29 W.H.G. Armytage, A.J. Mundela, 1825-1897 (London, 1951), p. 182.
- 30 G. Chesney, "Russia and India", The Nineteenth Century, Vol. 3, April 1878, pp. 605.



plain in Central Asia, they greeted each Russian advance with almost inevitable bursts of alarm and Russophobia.<sup>31</sup>

(C) Economic

Russia's quantum of trade with Asia in 1857 was much higher than that with Europe. While Russian manufactured goods formed an insignificant portion of her exports to Europe, they constituted half her exports to Asia. Central Asia was ideally suited for the cultivation of cotton. Syr-Darya was navigable upto the vicinity of Tashkent. The works of A. Semyonov concerning the Russian Empire's foreign trade and industry as well as the works of Y. Gagemeister and F. Turner (Advisors to the Finance Minister), A. Shipov, famous industrialist and trader, I. Borozin and V. Grigoryev, orientologists, and M. Ivanin, traveller-publicist, roused in Russia a great interest in the affairs of Asia. Journals like "Russkiy Vestnik", "Morskoi Sbornik" and "Ekonomichesky Ukazatel" devoted many pages to the developments in Asia. The role of Asia as the potential supplier of raw materials, especially cotton, and as a great consumer of Russian manufactured goods was emphasized by A. Shipov and Y.A. Gagemeister.<sup>32</sup>

Russian trading companies and transport organisations engaged in commerce with Central Asia were making their appearance even before Crimean War. Russian Tsars gave encouragement and

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31 G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier - 1865-95: A Study in Imperial Policy (London, 1963), pp. 1-3.

32 Devendra Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times (Moscow, 1970), pp. 40-49.

support to Mercury Steamer Company (established in 1849) and the trade houses of Baranov and Yelizarev. Barayatinoky and the Grand Prince Konstantin Nikolayevich backed the Trans-Caspian Society. Thus the economic prospects of a Russian conquest of Asia, primarily of Central Asia and bordering region of South Asia was quite a popular theme with the statesmen, industrialists, generals and journalists of Russia. Prominent Russians, namely, General V. Perovsky, General Blaramberg, A. Gorchakov, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire; Caucasian Commander A.I. Baryatinsky; Kavalevsky, the Director of the Asian Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; N. Khanykov, N. Ignatyev, Ch. Valikhanov, leaders of Russian missions in Central Asia; D.A. Milyutin, the Minister of War; General Bezak, the Governor General of Orenburg and etc., played an important role in implementing Russian policies in Central Asia and in the Indian frontiers regions.<sup>33</sup>

(D) Political

Political power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. It gives the former control over the latter's minds.<sup>34</sup> Political power is the psychological influence over the minds of the subject citizens, whereby they accept the authority of the legitimate political ruler as binding upon themselves. Russian menace was a threat more to British

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33 Ibid., pp. 41-43.

34 Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace (Calcutta, 1969), pp. 25-27.

political power in the subcontinent than to British military power. It was natural for Britain to carefully consider the contemporary state of affairs, and to formulate and carry out some consistent policy to protect her vast Eastern empire from the Russian menace. It was feared that "A Russian occupation of Herat would not only be a direct menace in itself, but, if allowed, would give rise amongst the people of Afghanistan and India to an impression that England feared to oppose the Russians."<sup>35</sup> And "even as it is, the Afghans could scarcely be depended upon to remain staunch allies, for they would naturally wait to discover the winning side; and any sign of weakness on the part of England would not only injure her best interests with them, but would alienate many who might be already vacillating in India itself."<sup>36</sup> Sir Charles Metcalfe remarked, "Our great danger is not from a Russian power but from the fading of the impression of invincibility from the minds of the native inhabitants of India."<sup>37</sup> British empire neither solely rested on opinion, nor solely on force. "It, in fact, depended on both."<sup>38</sup> If Britain had come to an agreement with Russia, that was no reason for

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35 Archibald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: The Struggle for Asia (London, 1900), pp. 50-52.

36 Ibid., p. 52.

37 Quoted in Sir J.W. Kaye, Lives of Indian officers (London, 1889), vol. 1, pp. 622-624.

38 Ibid., p. 624.

laying aside her long vigilance of Russian designs. On the contrary, that vigilance had to be redoubled, especially if England was to deal with Russia, either as friend or foe.

On the eve of Russian annexation of Central Asia, many deserters from British-Indian army had taken shelter in Bukhara and Kokand after the failure of 1857 uprising. The Russian advance in Central Asia stirred the hopes of Indian people to throw off the yoke of British colonial rule. Of course, this hope was at first confined to a few rulers of princely states who had no popular aspirations and who merely sought to utilise the contradictions between the two colonial powers to their advantage. The Tsarist government was not interested in promoting the cause of national liberation of India. It was interested in its colonial expansion only, though, for want of adequate material resources, it did not at the moment feel inclined to involve itself in troubles with the mighty British Empire.<sup>39</sup>

For the British, Russia was sometimes the reason for a conciliatory policy, sometimes an excuse for strong measures, a major factor, for instance, in determining affairs with the Sikhs in the thirties and forties, and one of the stimuli to

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N.A. Khalifa, Indian Missions in Russia in the Second Half of the 19th Century, XXVI International Congress of Orientalists, Papers presented by the USSR Delegation (Moscow, 1963), pp. 1-7.

expansion in Northern India. Both Ranjit Singh and Dost Mohammad attempted to play one power against the other, and Russia therefore accepted a prominent place in the new political knowledge that Indian feudal rulers and others began to acquire under pressure of British colonization.<sup>40</sup> Minaev was not far wrong in saying: "In India nothing of any importance seems to be undertaken without reference to Russia."<sup>41</sup> From the Indian point of view nineteenth century Anglo-Russian relations await a reassessment, and the students of international politics and history may hope to find in the documentation of the old competition among imperialists, historical basis for amicable relations between their successors.<sup>42</sup>

Travellers, in Northern India and beyond, noted suspicion of the British rule even in remote places, in contrast to a more favourable attitude towards Russia.<sup>43</sup> It encouraged the British fear that Russian Government might be more involved in the Indian borders than what was reported by British intelligence. Government of India feared that the Russian intelligence had better and more authentic information on northern Indian and Central Asian affairs than British intelligence.<sup>44</sup> Englishmen

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40 P.H. Komp, Dharat-Rus: An Introduction to Indo-Russian Contacts and Travels from Medieval Times to the October Revolution (Delhi, 1958), pp. 226-233.

41 Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 227.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

43 *Ibid.*, 228.

44 Rev. J. Long, Russia Central Asia and British India (London, 1865).

feared that Russian diplomacy, supposed to be "unrivalled in Europe", might be even more effective in Central Asia and India.<sup>45</sup>

In 1857 it was said that the news of the outbreak of Indian war of independence reached St. Petersburg earlier than London.<sup>46</sup> Further, the legend of friendly 'Rus' was revived in popular songs and rumours. Freedom fighters sought aid from Tsar and several letters were sent to Russia.<sup>47</sup> Azim Ullah had met Russian officers at Sevastopol on behalf of Nana Sahib.<sup>48</sup> It was the common belief in India that the Russians and Persians were ready to march an army into India and songs were sung in the streets of Agra to this effect.<sup>49</sup> Common man in Delhi believed that Russian troops had been put at the disposal of the Shah of Iran to march into India.<sup>50</sup>

A brief survey of the various missions from the princely rulers of India would explain British apprehension of Russian intrigues in domestic troubles.<sup>51</sup> Soon after the Russian

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45 Rev. J. Long, The Eastern Question in its Anglo-Indian Aspect (London, 1875).

46 P.M. Kemp, n. 4D, pp. 228-230.

47 J.W. Kaye, History of the Sepoy War, vol. 2., (London, 1876).

48 P.M. Kemp, n. 4D, pp. 226-230.

49 Rev. J. Long, n. 45.

50 J.W. Kaye, n. 4B.

51 N.A. Khalifa, n. 39, pp. 1-80.

occupation of Taskent, Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Kashmir sent a mission to Taskent. In 1866 the ruler of Indore sent a mission to Taskent. A second mission from Maharaja Ranbir Singh of Kashmir reached Taskent in June 1870. A mission of Guru Charan Singh, leader of Namdhari Sikhs, reached Taskent in 1879. N.I. Ivanov, head of the Zoravchan district, stressed the "importance of the fact that a part of population of British India appealed to us to help liberate them from foreign yoke." He added, "that in the speeches of Guru Charan Singh we find such confidence in Russia's power, such belief in our destiny to liberate the Indian people from the hateful domination of Britain that it is impossible to doubt our great impact on the population of British India."<sup>52</sup>

In 1887 Maharaja Duleep Singh, the grandson of Maharaja Ranjit Singh wrote a personal letter to Tsar Alexander III seeking Russian aid for liberating India from the British. In 1891 the envoys of the Hunza ruler Safdar Ali were received at Uch-Kurgan by Vrotsky as Governor General of Turkestan. Indian freedom fighters had placed high hopes on Russian aid in their struggle. The visit of Russian warships to Bombay in 1879 saw an upsurge of the liberation movement. People began to talk of a quick downfall of the British yoke, which would be cast off by Russia and freedom fighters.<sup>53</sup>

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52 Quoted in Devendra Kaushik, n. 32, pp. 100-114.

53 Ibid., pp. 105-106.

N.A. Khalifin argues that, the Russian ruling classes did not choose to use these opportunities of interfering in the affairs of India, because their realization was obstructed by the cautious policy of Russia, the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, the formation of the entente, and eventually by the First World War of 1914-18 in which Tsarist Russia was an ally of England.<sup>54</sup> These arguments do not at all explain the real cause of Russia's lack of active support to Indian liberation movement, as Tsarist Russia was never averse to interfering in the affairs of other countries. The real cause was that the colonial and imperialist character of Tsarist Russia prevented her giving aid to the Indian national liberation movements, and the lack of adequate material resources defeated all serious plans for the invasion of India.

The cumulative effect of all these strategic, psychological, economic and political considerations convinced the rulers of British Indian Empire that "the Russ was marching down from the north to drive the English into the Sea."<sup>55</sup>

#### (E) Eastern Question

In the second half of the 19th century the focal point of British colonial policy was concentrated on the "Eastern

54 N.A. Khalifin, n. 39, p. 6.

55 Sir George Trevelyan's, The Competition Wallah (London, 1834), p. 249.



Question", i.e. the struggle for inheriting the decaying Ottoman Empire. Russia was the principal adversary of the British in the Near and Middle East.<sup>56</sup> The Russian defeat in the Crimean War resulted in the transfer of Russian interest from the Balkans and the Near East to the Far East and Central Asia. The path of the Russian Empire in Europe, as Karl Marx wrote, was then barred. The "strengthening of the influence of Russian industry, trade and culture in Asia became the main object of Russian policy."<sup>57</sup> Russia firmly told Britain that she must give due consideration to Russia's interests in Asia, if she wanted to live in peace with Russia. It was declared that the future of Russia does not lie in Europe and that she must therefore turn her interest to Asia.<sup>58</sup> Thwarted in Europe, Russia naturally turned towards Asia and opened a second front for England, which had a brilliant Empire in India.

However, it was Russia rather than France that threatened the balance of power in the East. From Constantinople Russia could challenge the whole British position in the Mediterranean, which the Napoleon wars had shown was of the greatest importance.

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56 Dovendra Kaushik, Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the Early 19th Century (Moscow, 1970), pp. 96-99.

57 Instructions sent in 1858 by A. Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire, to the Russian Ambassador in London quoted in Dovendra Kaushik, n. 32, p. 41.

58 General Blaramberg's statement in January 1856, quoted in Dovendra Kaushik, n. 32, p. 41.

Britain therefore opposed Russian occupation of Constantinople by supporting Turkey in Crimean War.<sup>59</sup> The route to India also appeared to be threatened by Russian conflict with Turkey.<sup>60</sup>

Russian attempts at eastward expansion were the primary cause of Russophobia. The first attempt made by England to trade with Russia was in 1553, when the British Muscovy Company was founded. Attempts were also made, without much success, to trade with the Khanates of Central Asia through Russia. Though an English sailor, Jenkinson, flew the first British flag on the Caspian Sea and actually reached Bokhara, no regular communication with Central Asia could be established. Owing to their ignorance of Central Asian geography, Englishmen had thought that the only way to reach India - the fabulously wealthy "kingdom of the Great Mogul" - was through the Persia dominions. It is curious that the very state to which England had looked to afford a means of communication with India, later became her most dangerous and powerful rival.<sup>61</sup>

The crux of Anglo-Russian conflict was to inherit the decaying Ottoman and Chinese empires. English diplomats and statesmen never pushed the conflict to the breaking point, and

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59 Sir Charles Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830-41 (London, 1951, 2 vols), vol. 1, p. 85.

60 Edward Dicey, "Our Route to India", Nineteenth Century, (March, 1877), pp. 73 and 306.

61 Archibald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: A Struggle for Asia (London, 1900), p. 6.

both sides deliberately avoided direct armed clashes. Britain favoured cooperation with Russia for mutual benefits. Lord Salisbury of British Foreign Office made an overture to Russia on 25 January 1898. He expressed his ideas as follows: "The two empires of China and Turkey are so weak that in all important matters they are constantly guided by the advice of foreign powers. In giving this advice Russia and England are constantly opposed, neutralising each other's efforts much more frequently than the real antagonism of their interests would justify; and this condition of things is not likely to diminish but to increase. It is to remove or lessen this evil that we have thought that an understanding with Russia might benefit both nations."<sup>62</sup>

Lord Salisbury did not contemplate any infringement of existing Russian rights. He advocated a division of Ottoman and Chinese Empire into spheres of influence, without impairing their integrity. He wrote, "We do not admit the violation of any existing treaties, or impair the integrity of the present empires of either China or Turkey. These two conditions are vital. We aim at no partition of territory, but only a partition of preponderance. It is evident that both in respect to Turkey and China there are large portions which interest Russia much more than England and vice-versa. Merely as an illustration, and binding myself to nothing, I would say that

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62 Document 195, "Salisbury makes an overture to Russia", 25 January 1898, reproduced in H.W.V. Temperley, L.L. Benson, Foundations of British Foreign Policy - 1792-1907, (London, 1966), pp. 500-501.

the portion of Turkey which drains into Baltic Sea, together with the drainage valley of the Euphrates as far as Bagdad, interest Russia much more than England; whereas Turkish Africa, Arabia, and the valley of the Euphrates below Bagdad interest England much more than Russia. A similar distinction exists in China between the valley of Hoango with the territory north of it, and the valley of Yangtze."<sup>63</sup>

Salisbury argued that there was no irresolvable fundamental conflict of national interests in Anglo-Russian relations. He was prepared to yield to Russians many other strategic and political advantages, in return for mutual cooperation in the East. He wrote, "Would it be possible to arrange that where, in regard to the territories our counsels differ, the power least interested should give way to and assist the other? I do not disguise from myself that the difficulty would be great. Is it insuperable? I have designedly omitted the large tracts in each empire, because neither power has shown any interest in them."<sup>64</sup>

In the beginning of 1869, the Liberal government of Britain headed by Gladstone proposed to the Tsarist government the creation of a neutral zone in Central Asia between the territorial possessions of Britain and Russia. It matured into the "Clarendon-Gorchakov Agreement". The Conservative government

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63 Ibid., pp. 500-501.

64 Ibid., p. 501.

headed by Disraeli replaced the Liberal government of Gladstone in 1874. In the seventies there was a marked increase in colonial expansion, and it grew with the intensification of competition for world markets, particularly from Germany. The Disraeli cabinet took the path of expansion and colonial annexation in the most varied regions in the world - South Africa, Egypt, Turkey and the Middle East. Britain and Russia could have negotiated in this period a settlement for the division of Central Asia. In May 1875 they joined hands against Germany. Lord Derby declared that nothing could prevent Russia and England from coming to an agreement in Asia as there was room enough for both of them.<sup>65</sup>

However, the failure of the two governments to arrive at some agreement for the division of the East into spheres of influence, was the primary cause of Anglo-Russian conflict.

Russian eastward expansion increasingly dominated Anglo-Indian strategic thinking in the late nineteenth century, for Russia had emerged from the Napoleonic wars as the most powerful nation in Europe, and hence Britain's natural rival. Her rapid approach towards the vulnerable land frontier of the Indian Empire, an Empire won from and maintained by the sea, represented the decisive change in Britain's international

position.<sup>66</sup> It was almost an article of belief among the Russian General staff in the nineteenth century, as it had been with Napoleon, that without command of the sea and military offensive against Britain could only be effectively developed in Asia.<sup>67</sup> This was the total effect of all the strategic, psychological, economic and political factors responsible for the origin of Russophobia.

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66 H.T. Cheshire, "The Expansion of Imperial Russia to the Indian Border", Slavonic Review, XIII (1934-35), pp. 95-99.

67 B.A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, "The Shadow of India in Russian History", History XIV (1929-30), pp. 220-230.

**CHAPTER IV**

**RUSSIAN THREAT TO INDIAN SECURITY - II**

## CHAPTER IV

### RUSSIAN THREAT TO INDIAN SECURITY - II

#### Nature of the Threat

Russian threat to Indian security may be traced as far back as 1812 when the Will of Peter the Great was published.<sup>1</sup> He wrote, "Bear in mind that the commerce of India is the commerce of the world, and that he who can exclusively command it is a dictator of Europe. No occasion should therefore be lost to provoke war with Persia, to hasten its decay, to advance on the Persian Gulf...Maintain the state in a condition of perpetual war in order that the troops may be induced to warfare, and so that the whole nation may always be kept in training and ready to march at the first signal... Extend our dominions by every means on the north along the Baltic as well as towards the south."<sup>2</sup>

Russian expansion in Central Asia and northern frontier regions around the subcontinent had a kind of natural logic, based on the geopolitics of the region. Though there was a basic ethnological unity in Central Asia and the neighbouring regions, there were no well-defined boundaries. This factor had an important role in shaping the political destiny of the region. This Eurasian plain "dissolves in its vastness all

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1 M. Lesur, Des Progrès de la Puissance Russe (Paris, 1812), See also Appendix I.

2 Quoted in Archibald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: The Struggle for Asia (London, 1900), pp. 238-242.



invading forces and consequently does not allow them to maintain the necessary compactness to impress themselves, permanently on the great neighbouring civilizations."<sup>3</sup> It happened so, when the Mongols overran it, while marching westward towards Europe, and this was what happened when Russians advanced eastward towards India and China.

Russian menace was inherent in the basic character of Russian diplomacy. It may be said with truth that every kingdom, principality, or tribe to which Russia had extended "protection", had eventually been appropriated into the Muscovite Empire. In Europe she had gradually acquired Finland, Bessarabia, and other territories. Finding, however, that further extension in Europe is impracticable, except at immense sacrifice of life and money, she had for many years turned her attention to the more open field of Central Asia. Carrying out a policy similar to that pursued in Europe, she had by degrees pushed her way through tribe after tribe, protecting and annexing as she went. By the end of nineteenth century, she had practically arrived at the gates of Afghanistan. But even this was not desired to be the end of her march.<sup>4</sup>

In 1854, a scheme for the invasion of India was prepared by General Duhamel, and presented to the Tsar, to whom

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3 Prince A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Russian Imperialism in Asia", Slavonic Review, viii, No. 22 (June 1929), p. 29.

4 A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, p. 18.

it was pointed out that there were five routes by which Russia might proceed, and that if the friendship of Afghanistan in particular be gained, the path of victory would be easy.<sup>5</sup>

Russia did not plan any wild adventure, such as direct and brutal attack on India, but to strengthen her offensive power against India through Afghanistan - "The fulcrum of the lever which will open the way for her first to the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean, and eventually to the Mediterranean". The whole aim of Russia's advance into Central Asia had been: "to be able to 'squeeze' Britain in India, through Afghanistan."<sup>6</sup>

Acting on Peter the Great's saying, "The Kirghiz are a roaming and fickle people, but their country is the 'key and gate' to all the lands of Central Asia,"<sup>7</sup> Russians tried to use them as a means to that great end.<sup>8</sup>

When Persia appealed to Russia for aid to check the piracy of the Turkomans, on the Caspian Sea, Russia sent ships from the naval station on the island of Sari, and took possession of Ashurada at the mouth of the Gulf of Astrabad, in Caspian Sea, which she proceeded to fortify. By the treaty of Turkomanchi, Persia forfeited the right to keep war-vessels on this sea. This one of Russia's bloodless conquests, acquired simply by a cool, high-handed, and unscrupulous policy, afforded her one of the most valuable strategic positions in Central Asia.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Ibid., p. 18.

6 Ibid., pp. 210-211.

7 Ibid., p. 31.

8 Ibid., p. 17.

9 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

Another means by which Russia had long sought to come nearer to her goal (India) was by getting a footing in the Akhal country and she never rested till, having conquered the Turkomans of Akhal and Merv, she was able to establish garrisons close to Herat, the 'Key to India'.<sup>10</sup> "The Russians were virtually established in the emporium city, the fertile valley and the favourable climate of Herat." Englishmen saw "no geographical obstacle to her advance upon Hindustan and no obstacle whatever which can be reasonably deemed as insuperable by her arms or her intrigue."<sup>11</sup>

The province of Herat offered incalculable facilities to an invader having designs on India. The province had been called not inaccurately, "the key to India". The appellation is easy to understand. To recapitulate its advantages: it is fertile, and capable of supporting a large army, it dominates the roads leading to Kabul, Khandhar, Ghazni, and other important towns, thus indirectly the passes to India; and its natural features make it at once a barrier or a menace, depending on the possessor.<sup>12</sup> Rawlinson considered it of such importance that he expressed his willingness to give up all Afghanistan rather than allow Herat to be controlled by Russia. In his pithy phrase, "Herat and Khandhar were the Malakoff and Mamelon of

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10 Ibid., p. 40.

11 J.H. Stoequeler, Memoirs and Correspondence of Maj. Gen. Sir William Nott (London, 1854), vol. I, p. 68.

12 A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, pp. 220-23.

India."<sup>13</sup> The pivot of the whole Eastern question, in Rawlinson's view, was that Britain cannot afford to expose Herat to the risk of being taken by a Russian coup de main. "Russia in possession of Herat," he said, "would have a grip on the throat of India."<sup>14</sup>

Manchester Guardian in February 1873 was prone to believe that the "invasion of India can take place even from Keshgar". But this statement even an ardent Russophobe like Rawlinson did not like to make.<sup>15</sup>

Russia wanted to force her way to a warm water sea, to a seaport on the Persian Gulf or Arabian Sea, where she could create another Vladivostock. With forethought, energy, and fertility of resources, Russia was leading the way, and "showing the world how to conquer by railways".<sup>16</sup> Russia realised how more valuable were communications than mere army corps; how necessary in the conduct of a nation's foreign policy was a "fixed plan". Russian railways, made by Russians for Russia, then ran right across Asia, under Russian guard, from Moscow to the China Sea, and from Batum through Trans-Caspia to the "Western gates of the Chinese Empire", and to the Herat province (not the town) - "the key of Afghanistan", which is the

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13 Quoted in A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, p. 222.

14 Quoted in A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, p. 222 .

15 Sir Henry Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London, 1875), pp. 344-350.

16 A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, pp. 183-201.

"outwork of India."<sup>17</sup> Both in the region of the Far East and of Central Asia, the Russian railways were planned to be gradually carried further south - through China to the Yangtze Valley (the area under an exclusive British influence), and through Persia to the Indian Ocean. There was a great danger both to British maritime supremacy, and to the security of Indian Empire, from that constant dominion and growing control of the world's highways by Russia.

India, to Russia, was a land of fabulous wealth. The Russian method of achieving her objective seemed to have undergone a change. She had abandoned the old idea of a direct military invasion of India. The new plan envisaged commanding Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan by means of railways, and reaching India's north-eastern frontier by way of China.<sup>18</sup> Russophobists advocated an immediate military demonstration towards the Indian frontier - "the vulnerable heel."<sup>19</sup>

Skobelev planned to hurl "masses of Asiatic cavalry" into India, learning from the experience of Cossacks in Central Asia and Siberia, as otherwise Russians would have had to fight the Afghans en route. Therefore the Russian policy was

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17 Ibid., p. 194.

18 Ibid., p. 195.

19 Ibid., pp. 194-195.

to develop cordial relations with Afghanistan, and to develop its resources, along with other Central Asian regions.<sup>20</sup> The manner in which Caucasia and Central Asia had been subdued by the Cossacks was but an example of what, no doubt, she would have been able to effect in any portion of territory she would have acquired in Asia, in the vicinity of India.<sup>21</sup>

Even as Constantinople was her aim in Europe, so in Asia was India the prize she coveted. Peter the Great is reported to have said in his Will, "Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. He who establishes himself in those two places will be the true sovereign of the world."<sup>22</sup> Whether the words are authentic or not, Russia has relentlessly pursued the scheme they indicate. Sir Henry Rawlinson argued, "Anyone who traces the movements of Russia towards India on the map of Asia, cannot fail to be struck with the resemblance which these movements bear to the operations of an army opening parallels against a beleaguered fortress."<sup>23</sup>

Russian menace was the direct outgrowth of the geography of the northwest frontier of India. "To understand the significance of the northwest frontier of India, as the

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20 Ibid., p. 196r

21 Ibid., p. 198.

22 Quoted in A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, pp. 198-200.

23 Quoted in A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, pp. 198-200.

Government of India looked far beyond the immediate boundaries of the Indian Empire. "In the British Empire there is but one land frontier on which warlike preparations must ever be ready."<sup>24</sup>

Catherine II proposed earlier in the year 1791 to issue a manifesto declaring her intention of going to the aid of the Great Mogul and to bring a Russian army to India to restore his power.<sup>25</sup> It had been said that little resistance was to be expected in Central Asia or in India owing to internal divisions, while the proposed routes had already been prospected by Russian agents.<sup>26</sup>

The idea of a military expedition to India was not new even then. A Russo-Austrian treaty of 1746 stipulated mutual military aid, in the event of "sending Russian armies to India and Bohemian auxiliaries to Persia."<sup>27</sup> A plan was initiated in French cabinet to penetrate India in concert with Russia by way of Caspian Sea through Eastern Persia and Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> The invasion route proposed to Catherine II from Orenburg through Bukhara was adopted later by Paul I. Paul I ordered the despatch of a large force of Cossack cavalry in Orenburg in January 1801.<sup>29</sup>

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24 H.J. Mackinder, India (London, 1910), p. 118.

25 P.M. Kemp, Bharat-Rus (Delhi, 1958), pp. 190-197.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

27 Review of the Affairs of India 1798-1806 (London, 1807).

28 P.M. Kemp, n. 25, pp. 190-192.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

The Czar's hostility with Englishmen and sympathy with the Great Moghul and lesser princes of India was obvious. He wrote to the Cossack Ataman, General Orlov: "The English have their trading factories among them, acquired by money or arms, hence the aim is to destroy all these, but to free all the oppressed rulers and bring the country into the same dependency on Russia as it now is on the English and turn its trade in our direction."<sup>30</sup> Czar wrote again, "Remember that your business is with the English only and peace with all who do not give them aid, and proceeding in this manner, assure them of the friendship of Russia and march from the Indus to the Ganges and attack the British there."<sup>31</sup>

In the phase after Tilsit (1807), Napoleon again revived the plan of an invasion of India and an even more grandiose scheme was again well advertised. During correspondence between Napoleon and Alexander I, the former referred to the well-known caravan routes via the Caspian, the expedition of Nadir Shah and Russian information on the countries bordering Northern India. Some times more than an ordinary military expedition was envisaged. Scholars, artists, engineers, scientists, cartographers etc. were to accompany the troops.

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30 Quoted by P.M. Kemp, n. 26, p. 192.

31 Quoted by P.M. Kemp, n. 25, p. 192.



There was to be a triumphal march proclaiming friendship to the Khans and princes along the route, for whom the rich presents were to include the choicest articles of French manufacture. The commissariat was to go on ahead to establish friendly relations at each stage and to purchase food for the huge personnel and army.<sup>32</sup> Napoleon added that such proclamations were to announce that "the army of the two most powerful nations in the world is to pass through their domains in order to reach India; that the sole aim of this expedition consists of driving out of Hindustan the British who have enslaved these beautiful lands, once so renowned, mighty and rich in products and industries that they attracted the peoples of the whole universe to partake of the gifts which it had pleased Heaven to lavish upon them; that the terrible state of oppression, misery and slavery under which the peoples of those countries now grow, has inspired the most lively sympathy of France and Russia; that in the consequence of this these two states have decided to unite their forces for the liberation of India from the tyrannous yoke of the British; that there is nothing to be feared on the part of the rulers and peoples of the countries through which the allied army has to pass; that on the contrary, they are invited to cooperate in all ways towards the success

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32 P. M. Kemp, n. 25, p. 193.

of this useful and glorious undertaking."<sup>33</sup>

There was to be a grand send off to celebrate the departure from Astrabad and no fighting was supposed to take place until contact with the British was made on the Indus.<sup>34</sup> Alexander ~~Implied~~ replied to Napoleon that "the views of your Highness seem to me as magnificent as they are just. It has been left to a lofty genius such as yours to create such a comprehensive plan and it behoves that genius to lead it to its fulfilment. I have set forth interests of my empire to General Kolonkur and he is fully authorised to represent my views to your Highness. They will be discussed from all points of view by him and by Rumyanetsov and if your Highness is in agreement with them, I will offer one army for the expedition into India and another for the purpose of cooperating in taking control of Asia Minor at coastal positions. At the same time, I am instructing my commanders of the fleet to place themselves fully at your Highness disposal."<sup>35</sup> Russian designs on Central Asia and Asia Minor were a major concern in the history of the power politics of the East and could not be thought of without reference to India.<sup>36</sup>

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33 Quoted by P.M. Komp, n. 28, p. 193.

34 P.M. Komp, n. 28, p. 193.

35 Quoted by P.M. Komp, n. 28, p. 194.

36 P.M. Komp, n. 28, p. 194.

There was no doubt that the Russian name and influence was materially injurious to British interests even as far the eastern side of the Indus. The rumours of the power and bravery of the Russians, exaggerated by distance and talked of in oriental style as it passed from one person to another, had given ample reason for restlessness and hope in the minds of the discontented chiefs of India. This was indeed not limited to Mohammedans only, but extended to Rajput chiefs of India also, and every one was looking forward with anxiety for the expected reverses of the English.<sup>37</sup>

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37 W. Moorcroft, and G. Trebeck, Travels in Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab from 1819-1825 (London, 1841).

CHAPTER V

BRITISH INDIA'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE - I

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#### Containment of Global Challenge

The long drawn out Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia, shorn of all minor considerations, was nothing but a race to gain greater advantage by quicker and better control of strategic positions in Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asian principalities. This rivalry was pronounced after the Crimean War. Russia began her expansion in the coveted region and tried to assume a military position from where an advance towards India could be threatened, if not accomplished. This movement was to serve as a check on British opposition to Russian policy at the Balkans.<sup>1</sup> It was said, "the more powerful Russia becomes in Central Asia, the weaker does England become in India, and, consequently, the more amenable in Europe."<sup>2</sup> It was in this light that Russian General Skoboleff declared that not for a generation or more would Russia be able to advance beyond Herat upon India. "But", he went on to say, "in the meantime, by this railway of ours, we are assuming a menacing position towards England, which will keep her occupied in India, and prevent her interfering us in other parts

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1 James G. Allen, Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1865-1895 (1934).

2 Statement by Russian General A. Sabolev, quoted in A.R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India (London, 1900), p. 202.

of the world."<sup>3</sup>

Russian aim of extending her sphere of influence nearer to India and her alliances<sup>2</sup> with Asiatic states to threaten British Indian Empire, in order to injure Indian resources, and ultimately endanger English power, was done mainly for the purpose of "acquiring more weight in European politics."<sup>4</sup> Malcolm argued that "the battle of India must in some measure be fought in Europe"<sup>5</sup> and one of the weapons to be used was to stimulate revolt among the subject peoples of the Russian Empire not only in Kirghiz in Asia, but also the Polish nationalities in the West. For instance, John Arvin wrote, "It is in Europe that the battle of Afghanistan most probably be ultimately fought."<sup>6</sup> When Khiva fell to Russia, he again opined that "unless we settle the question at least for the current cycle of years by a bold movement on the frontier, we shall be facing as the alternative and then it may perhaps be difficult anyhow to escape an European war with Russia."<sup>7</sup> Lord Lytton's policy (after 1875), was to be

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3 A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, p. 50.

4 Statement of Sir John Malcolm, in "Notes on the Invasion of India by Russia transmitted by Sir John McDonald to the Court of Directors", March 1830, quoted by P.M. Kemp, Bharat Rus (Delhi, 1958), p. 196.

5 Memoranda on the Northwest Frontier of British India and the importance of the River Indus as connected with its defence drawn by the desire of Sir John Malcolm 1830, quoted in P.M. Kemp, n. 4, p. 196.

6 V.K. Chavda, India, Britain, Russia (Delhi, 1967), p. 170.

7 Ibid., p. 171.

active and to checkmate Russia in Central Asia. When in 1877, Disraeli forecaw a war with Russia on the Eastern question, he wrote to the Queen, "In such a case Russia must be attacked from Asia, that troops should be sent to the Persian Gulf, and that the Empress of India should render her armies to clear Central Asia of the Muscovite and drive them into the Caspian." He intimated her, "we have a good instrument for this purpose in Lord Lytton and indeed he was placed there with that view."<sup>8</sup>

Russia during 1853 was attempting to develop Persia as an advanced outpost. There were dangers of Russian occupation of Afghanistan and the consequent possibility of her invasion of India. "While Russia was marching on India", Lord Palmerston concluded, "we should not be idle in Europe; but still Russia is strong in her European defences whether in the Baltic or in the Black Sea and it is well that we should be able to defend India in Asia as well as in Europe."<sup>9</sup>

All pervading keen Muslim fanaticism on the Indian border at times presented a threat far more dangerous than the Russian menace. Lord Lawrence therefore did not criticise Russians for defeating the army of Bokhara. He wrote, "it will do a great deal of good, the Mohamedans in Central Asia getting a pounding, the effect will be to abate keen fanaticism."<sup>10</sup> "The Times" believed that it was not the nearness but "the distance

8 G.E. Buckle, W.E. Conger, Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (London, 1924), vol. 6, p. 155.

9 Evelyn Ashley, The Times of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston: 1804-1865 (London, 1876).

10 V.K. Chavda, n. 6, p. 183.

from Russia in Asia which was to be regretted", as every step there, he supposed was in the direction of civilisation.<sup>11</sup> The "Manchester Guardian" argued that the importance of the Russian movement nearer to India was that it brought Russia a long step nearer to the position of actual, if not nominal, arbitrator of affairs on the northwest frontier of Indian Empire,<sup>12</sup> as the power of all the principalities separating Indian and Russian Empire was very insignificant. But Rawlinson criticised the above approach, and was convinced that to proclaim the superiority of the Russian rule to the barbarous Islamism of the independent states in Central Asia was to stimulate encroachment, while the exaggeration of Britain's difficulties, both military and financial, in furnishing means of defence could only tend to invite aggression.<sup>13</sup>

"India may in fact be regarded as the centre or pivot of Britain's Empire in the East, and for this reason alone setting aside all other considerations, must be defended against foreign aggression."<sup>14</sup> It was not only British supremacy that was at stake. Had foreign invasion of India taken place,

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11 Ibid., p. 130;

12 Ibid., p. 130.

13 Sir Henry Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London, 1875), pp. i-xii.

14 Major General E.B. Hamley, The Strategical Conditions of our Indian Northwest Frontier (London, 1878).



the uninterrupted English intercourse with her Eastern colonies, and consequently the well-being of the British Empire itself, would have been immediately threatened. Major General Hamley was convinced that "there is no territory on which it could be more perilous to give an enemy the chance of winning a battle than Indian Empire."<sup>15</sup> It was generally agreed that any further approach of a great foreign military power toward the confines of India would entail upon the latter such an intolerable amount of expense in the shape of additional fortifications and other measures of defence as to make it absolutely intolerable, and would have been less preferable than any other alternative, however, serious.<sup>16</sup> These statements clearly indicate that India's only course of action, if the integrity of Indian Empire and with it the interests of British Eastern colonies were to be safeguarded, was counter-offensive.

The principal objective of the foreign policy of India under the British from the beginning to the end was the security of the natural frontiers of India, by territorial expansion or other means, on the northwest and the northeast.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Ibid.,

16 Statement by the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, ex-Viceroy of India, at the Guildhall, May 29, 1899, quoted by A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, p. 202.

17 R.C. Majumdar, British paramountcy and Indian Renaissance. The History and Culture of the Indian People, Part I, (1963), pp. 1039-1044.

The British interest in the northern region can be attributed to the "fear of Russian advance into Central Asia and Persia."<sup>18</sup> British policy had been formulated for a long term domination of Central Asia.<sup>19</sup> However, the Russian danger galvanised the British into "frantic activity."<sup>20</sup> Indian policy in Central Asia was always, from the sixties of the nineteenth century onwards, a blend of commercial means and political ends. Trade was only a weapon, but having the great lever of political influence. All the Viceroys of India, except Lawrence and Ripon, encouraged trade with Central Asia, in order to extend Indian political influence.<sup>21</sup>

It is very difficult to say precisely what was the state of knowledge on Central Asian matters at the Indian Board of Directors or how much influence was wielded by its officers. It may be said that neither was considerable.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Roacock, the chief examiner of correspondence at the Indian House, prepared a memo based on the works of celebrated Russian travellers, Mayendroff and Mouraviovo. It was known

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- 18 P.N.K. Bamzai, Kashmir from Lake Success to Tanhkant (Delhi, 1966), pp. 28-30.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 31-40.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 40-46.
- 21 G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-95, (London, 1963), pp. 90-100.
- 22 William Foster, The East India House (London, 1924), (London, 1924), pp. 200-220.

that there was great scope for the navigation of the Oxus and Jaxartes for nearly 200 miles through the Aral Sea between Kilif on the Oxus and Koken on the Jaxartes. "The question is not", Peacock wrote, "whether this shall be done but whether England or Russia shall do it," and he went on to suggest that India should preoccupy these "marine highways."<sup>23</sup> Indian newspapers exclaimed in 1856 that, "we are drifting fast into the shoreless sea of the Central Asian politics," and fervently asked, "are the gates of India to be English or Russian? Is the Tartar cradle to be ruled from London or St. Petersburg."<sup>24</sup> This confusion regarding Central Asian affairs was widely prevalent and many divergent views were expressed.

Russia was thought to be acting on a carefully prepared plan, in its general scheme of expansion in the East. This was the "Will of the Peter the Great". In any discussion of Central Asia, this is a recurring reference. This was such a quotation that very rarely is the Eastern question dealt with without that "armed head" making its weird apparition from the cauldron of political witchcrafting.<sup>25</sup> This document had been a textbook of Russian policy." In all political writings showing a distrust of Russia and advocating a forward policy in India, the Will of Peter the Great was either mentioned,

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23 Lord Broughton, Recollections of a Long Life (London, 1911), ed. Lady Dorchester, vol. 5, pp. 290-310 & 183-185.

24 V.K. Chavda, n. 6, pp. 200-202.

25 Karl Blind, "Russia and the East", Macmillan Magazine, May 1869, p. 36.

or its policy delineated to substantiate the argument.<sup>26</sup>

In 1860's the Austrian War minister predicted that Russia would try to reach the open sea by operating through Asia. "Russia will not reach the shores of the Persian Gulf in one stride, or by means of one great war, but taking advantage of continental complications, when the attention and energy of European States are engaged in context more nearly concerning them, she will endeavour to reach the Persian Gulf step by step. The growth of Russia in the East threatens, though indirectly, the whole of Europe, as well as the states named above, for if she were firmly established in Asia Minor, the real apple of discord, Constantinople, would be in imminent danger, all the commerce in the Mediterranean would fall into her hands, and she would command the canal through the Isthmus of Suez."<sup>27</sup>

Russian movements seem to follow the above conclusion. It explains the entire Russian strategy underlying Russophobia. "The expansion of the Northern Colossus - more oriental than European, whose heart of Empire lies in Central Asia - into China and toward natural zone of influence of Europe; her determination to control commerce, religion, and communications,

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26 Ibid., pp. 35-39.

27 Quoted by A.R. Colquhoun, n. 2, pp. 228-229.

are grave dangers for all other nations, and, more especially the Anglo-Saxon peoples," said A.R. Colquhoun.<sup>28</sup> He opined, that "unchecked, they would lead to the subjugation of Europe by Asia."<sup>29</sup>

One may agree with the concluding paragraph of A.R. Colquhoun that "The danger is clear to anyone who will take up the map. Russia already becoming a paramount power in Northern China; Russia with a port on the Persian Gulf or Indian Ocean; Russia connecting Central Asia with the Persian Gulf by railways, thus making herself independent of the Dardanelles and the Suez Canal, and cutting into the direct Indo-European line of overland communication."<sup>30</sup>

He concluded that, "a conflict between East and West for the domination of the old world is imminent. Slav and Saxon must contend for supremacy, even for equality and upon the skill and determination of the two opponents hangs the future of Asia, and not only of Asia but of Europe."<sup>31</sup> It is the clearest exposition of the geopolitical legacy of the northern Indian frontier regions, that there was eternal conflict between Indian Empire and Russian Empire, for the domination of the adjoining principalities.

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28 Ibid., p. 229.

29 Ibid., p. 229.

30 Ibid., p. 230.

31 Ibid., p. 230.

**CHAPTER VI**

**BRITISH INDIA'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE - II**

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### BRITISH INDIA'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE - II

#### Containment of the Northern Challenge

India is a geographical unit. It is an enormous peninsula jutting out to the south and shielded by the mighty Himalayan mountain range to the north. There is to the northeast a narrow and difficult corridor to Burma, which has not for most of its history been the route of any very important traffic between peoples.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the "north-west", India's northern frontier has been such as to cut her off almost entirely from land communication with her neighbours; indeed India's commercial communications with the rest of the world in the modern era have been largely sea-borne. Nonetheless, throughout the nineteenth century, the mountaineous "roof of the world" was the scene of constant observation and frequent intervention by British agents, patrols and garrisons. Strategic frontier posts grew up like mushrooms, each more advanced than the last.<sup>2</sup> The crescent shaped northern frontier of the British India Empire had three main lines of approach from the north - on the east, from Kashgar towards Ladhak;

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1 I.W. Mabbott, A Short History of India (Melbourne, 1968), p. 2.

2 G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-95: A Study of Imperial Policy (London, 1963), p. ix.

in the centre, from the Pamirs towards Hunza and Yasin; and on the west, from the western Pamirs or the upper Oxus provinces towards Chitral.<sup>3</sup>

Just where the Indian and Russian Empires almost met, there is one of the most stupendous mountain barriers in the world. But at the same time the Russian and British Empires on the northern frontier of India were closer together than anywhere else in the world. As the gap closed, increasingly on each side suspicion beget suspicion and activity beget activity in a sort of vicious chain reaction. These were a sort of "preventive measures which insure a proximate and certain mischief."<sup>4</sup> This inbred mutual suspicion of Britain and Russia resulted from a mutually antagonistic perception of their national interests.<sup>5</sup>

In August 1891, Russia had annexed the Pamirs, including Rang Oul, the Ak-Su Valley, the Little Pamirs. And Young Husband was expelled from Bozai Gumbaz and forced under protest to withdraw. A Russian party explored the area as far as the Summit of Parkot Pass, and collected information about the routes on the other side of it. Russians had put forward

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3 Ibid., p. 300.

4 E. Ashley, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston: 1846-65 (London, 1876), vol. II, pp. 330-333.

5 E. Reclus, New Universal Geography (transl. London, 1875), vol. VI, pp. 287-289.



a claim to annex the whole of the Pamirs and had thereby pushed their frontier to the crest of Hindu Kush passes. In one stroke, Russians had shattered the Afghan and Chinese barrier which the Indian Government had been so patiently constructing to protect itself from just such a move. Control of the Little Pamir not only gave them the command of the Wakhan-Kashgar trade route, but also threatened Bozai Gumbaz, the "Gibraltar of the Hindu Kush",<sup>6</sup> which was only a few hours away from the northern approaches to Hunza. It was these moves "generally equivalent to a declaration of war which triggered of the first Pamir crisis of 1891."<sup>7</sup>

Indian Government attempted to enlist the support of China, for she could have been a valuable ally in the dispute. It was in her power to cause Russia a great deal of trouble along a very extensive land frontier. Moreover, there was much that Russia wanted from China, and this would also tend to make her responsive to Chinese pressure.<sup>8</sup> As soon as the news of Russian advance arrived, China was consulted and urged to occupy all she claimed on the Pamirs. But China announced in May 1892, that the projecting tongue of the land which Young-Kusband had assigned to her was "strategically indefensible", and proposed that Pamirs should be neutralized. Neutralization never found favour in India as a solution of Central Asian

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6 The phrase was coined by Archibald Philip Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebury (18 -1929), Foreign Minister 1886 and 1892-94, Prime Minister 1894-95.

7 E.F. Knight, Where Three Empires Meet (London, 1893), pp. 268-69.

8 G.J. Alder, n. 2, p. 234.

problems. Indian Government argued that neutralization of the Pamirs would have to be preceded by their delimitation. But delimitation was the solution which the Chinese rarely favoured. Delimitation between Russian and Indian (or, rather Afghan) territories without China would have been unsatisfactory. Besides, expansionist military authorities always opposed delimitation, as they always wanted acceptance of the valuable fait accompli.<sup>9</sup>

The second Pamir crisis really dates from a top level and highly secret meeting between the Russian War and Foreign Ministries which was held in St. Petersburg sometime in May 1892. Then Russians decided to establish an effective occupation on the Pamirs as near to the Hindu Kush passes as possible, so as to create for themselves a strong bargaining position before a joint delimitation.<sup>10</sup>

The spring of 1892 was marked by the usual crop of rumours about the new "annual filibustering expedition" to the Pamirs by the Russians. But there were signs early in 1893 that Russians were going to abandon direct action and take up delimitation as a solution to Pamir dispute. From this point, delimitation and diplomacy held the field and the final Pamir

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9 See for a complete description of the First Pamir Crisis (1891-92), G.J. Alder, n. 2, pp. 206-248.

10 See for a complete description second Pamir Crisis, (1892-93), Ibid., pp. 248-263.

crisis of 1893, unlike those of the previous two years was entirely a diplomatic one.<sup>11</sup>

Opinions differed as to whether Russians could actually move the force to the passes through the Pamir route.<sup>12</sup> To some they were "a certain death-trap for invading armies," to others, "the vulnerable gates of Hindustan."<sup>13</sup> Young Husband argued if Russians only crossed the Pamirs in summer, they would arrive without real trouble in the autumn just when the routes to the south became practicable.<sup>14</sup> Durand also argued that Pamirs would offer no great difficulty to the passage of a Russian force. But the experiences and supply difficulties encountered by the British members of the Pamir Boundary Commission in 1895 convinced them that the Pamir route was impossible for a Russian advance and could be left outside the pale of strategic consideration.<sup>15</sup>

British diplomacy had been trying to ensure, with eventual success, that the three empires, namely Russian, India, Chinese did not meet. Amidst the voiceless waste of

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- 11 See for the complete and detailed description and analysis of the third Pamir crisis and its settlement 1893-1895, *Ibid.*, pp. 263-287.
- 12 J. Wood, Journey to the Source of the River Oxus (London 1872), pp. 1, iv. Sir Thomas Edward Gordon, The Roof of the World (Edinburg, 1876), pp. 160-61.
- 13 George Nathaniel Curzon, "The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus" (London, 1897), p. 2.
- 14 Sir Francis Edward Young Husband, Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1899 (Calcutta, 1890), pp. 105-106.
- 15 T.H. Holdich, Indian Borderland 1830-1900 (London, 1909) pp. 312-313.

a vast white wilderness 20,000 feet above the sea, absolutely inaccessible to man and within the reach of no living creature but the Pamir eagles - there the three great empires actually did meet.<sup>16</sup>

India prevented any Russian infiltration down to the Hindu Kush through unclaimed territory. There were two dangerous gaps - one between Chinese and Kashmir territory in Ladakh and other between Chinese and Afghan lands on the Pamirs. The boundary, of course, had remained undefined, but between the Karakoram and Mustagh passes it was generally regarded as being the watershed of the Karakoram Range.<sup>17</sup> It was feared that Russia will drive a wedge between China and Kashmir and so not only dominate the trade between China and Kashmir, but threaten Ladakh by the various caravan routes which entered it. On account of this Young Husband encouraged the local Kirghis to rebuild the fort at Sahidulla and promised to forward to the Indian Government their request to be taken under British protection, since the Chinese seemed unable to protect them against the Huza raids.<sup>18</sup> But Chinese officials

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16 Ibid., pp. 293-94.

17 F. Maisey, The Topography, Ethnology, Resources and History of Ladak (Calcutta, 1828), p. 34.

18 Sir Francis Edward Young Husband, Confidential Report of a Mission to the Northern Frontier of Kashmir in 1889 (Calcutta, 1890), pp. 12-15.

moved in and asserted the claims upto Karakoram. And it was acknowledged that the boundaries of India and China meet at the Indus Watershed. British officials in Kashmir were instructed to regard the Karakoram Watershed, then the northern limit of the Chinese claims as the northern boundary of Kashmir. The complementary problem of sealing the south-western approaches to any unclaimed corridor between China and Kashmir had also preoccupied the Indian Government long before the Pamir crisis of 1891 brought it to a head. The Indian attitude was that there must be no gap between the end of the Afghan-Russian frontier running east and Sino-Russian frontier running south.

The line running from the Kokcha Junction along the Oxus to Lake Victoria, which was in 1895 confirmed and continued eastward across the Pamirs to the Chinese frontier, has remained unaltered ever since. Today it marks the southern limit of the Soviet Central Asian Empire and its nearest approach to the political frontier of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>19</sup> Both sides realised that the long attenuated arm of Afghanistan reaching out to touch China with the tips of its fingers would be useless as a defensive barrier in the time of war.<sup>20</sup> Russia gave up

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19 For a discussion about this see O. Latimore, Pivot of Asia (Boston, 1950).

20 Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, Indian Borderland 1820-1900 (London, 1909), pp. 283-284.

all instead a great deal of territory of the Pamirs. India gave up the chance of direct control to the north of the passes, but maintained the glacis free from Russian occupation.<sup>21</sup> Though the Russian military opinion solidly lined up against the agreement, many Russians were pleased with it.<sup>22</sup> The permanence of the line is the testimony of the fact that it represented a genuine compromise. The Pamir demarcation completed the southern limitations of Russia's Central Asiatic Empire and made further expansion impossible except at the risk of war. And this was a risk which a weakened Russia, was unable to face, after the resounding defeat at the hands of Japan, faced with the growing threat of Austrian ambitions in Ballians, and German designs at Constantinople. A partial result was the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 and it was based almost on the removal of old rivalries in Central Asia. The settlement of 1895 was a considerable step in this direction. To that extent, it played its part in the shifting of alliances which preceded the outbreak of war in Europe nearly twenty years later.<sup>23</sup> In itself, it is the testimony of the correctness and foresightedness of British concepts of northern Indian frontier problems.

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21 For a discussion about this, see H. Grulef, The Rivalry of Russia and England in Central Asia (St. Petersburg, 1909), pp. 40-50.

22 B.H. Sumner, Toarion and Imperialism 1880-1914 (Raleigh-Lochire 1940), pp. 35-39.

23 G.J. Alder, n. 2, pp. 206-207.

**CHAPTER VII**

**BRITISH INDIA'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE - III**

## CHAPTER VII

### BRITISH INDIA'S COUNTER OFFENSIVE - III

#### Containment of Northwestern Challenge

The significance of Afghanistan to the Indian Government lay not only in Russophobia, but also in the expansion of British power in India upto its northernmost limits.<sup>1</sup> When the Sikhs were ruling Punjab, the first impression which the Afghans made on the British rulers of India was of a menace, shadowy, but nonetheless formidable to the peace and security of their north-western territories.<sup>2</sup> When in the beginning of nineteenth century Zaman Shah of Kabul was planning an expedition to northern India, Marquis Wellesley's first move was to contract an alliance with the Persian Government requesting them to take measures to keep Zaman Shah in perpetual check so as to preclude him from invading India.<sup>3</sup> Lord Auckland four decades later staged a military demonstration on the southern coast of Persia, to forestall the Shah's own eastward advance. Thus Britain played Afghanistan and Iran

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1 See Chapter I, pp. 2-4.

2 Sir W.K. Frazer - Tytler, Afghanistan (Oxford, 1953), pp. 76-79.

3 Sir H.C. Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London, 1875), pp. 7-9.



against each other. But during the time of Lord Wellesley and for long afterwards the "British had no conception of the strategic problems which were immediately confronting them in their advance to the north-west. They treated the Persians as friends and allies because they happened to know them, and they looked on the Afghans as potential enemies because they were possibly rivals for the hegemony of northern India. The strategic connection of Afghanistan with the security of India had not yet crossed the horizon of their consciousness."<sup>4</sup>

The first major discussion not only of the Afghan policy but of the whole Central Asian policy of the Indian Government took place during the Vicereignty of Lord Auckland. As with his predecessor Lord John Lawrence, masterly inactivity had become a fixed idea with him, and he would have nothing to do with countries beyond the Indus. Lord Auckland was also able to obtain concurrence in his views from his frontier officers, though he was not successful in enlisting support of his Commanders-in-Chief on many matters.<sup>5</sup>

Lord Lytton was the first to define for India a coherent policy towards Afghanistan, and its outline was followed without

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4 Sir W.K. Fraser-Tytler, n. 2, p. 79.

5 Sir Owen Tudor Eames, Memories (London, 1907), pp. 59-60.

exception by all his successors. He wrote, "The natural boundary of India is formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalaya and of the Hindu Kush which have extended northward upto their junction. Within the angle thus formed lie the territories of Chitral, Darel, Yasin, Hunza, and other petty dependancies. From Hunza on the slope of Mustagh, westward to Chitral under the Hindu Kush, these states occupy the valleys which run upto the skirts of the ranges, and are drained by the uppermost tributaries of the Indus river system and the only passes through these ranges from the Pamir are in the hands of these semi-independent chiefs. If a strong, independent and hostile power were established on the north of these mountains, the passes might become a line of demonstration, which might at least be useful as a diversion to facilitate and support the flank of more serious operations in Afghanistan. If on the other hand, we extend, and by degrees consolidate, our influence over this country, and if we resolve that no foreign interference can be permitted on this side of mountains, or within the drainage system of the Indus, we shall have laid down a natural line of frontier which is distinct, intelligent, and likely to be respected."<sup>6</sup>

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6 Quoted in G.J. Alder, British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95: A Study in Imperial Policy (London, 1963), pp. 12-13.

Lord Dufferin called it to be a minimum programme, as India's "nervous tissues" extended a good deal beyond Indian material and military jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup> The Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges divided the political area into two zones. North of the mountains were India's "nervous tissues" - those lands which were within the range of strategic interest but which were beyond the range of either effective military operation or occupation. South of the mountains were the areas which could if necessary be actively coerced or defended. Slowly and haltingly two policies were evolved to match this dichotomy. The end of which - the security of the Indian Empire from external threat - was the same.<sup>8</sup>

The Russian threat to India was not felt for the first time through the northern approaches of Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, but through Persia in the plains of Herat. Geopolitically, speaking it was in the interest of Russia to have alliance with and to extend and strengthen the Persian Empire which occupied a central position between the double line of operation of the Russian Imperial expansion to the east and to the west.<sup>9</sup> Indian Government feared that Russia had

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7 Ibid., p. 13.

8 Ibid., pp. 13-14.

9 D.C. Boulger, Lord William Bentinck (Oxford, 1892), pp. 176-181.

encouraged Shah of Iran to besiege city of Horat. It was feared that if unchecked, the eastward movement of the Shah would only follow its usual pattern; either conquest or subversion of Afghan power and smooth descent with myriads of plundering mountaineers on the plains of India.<sup>10</sup> But Shah was more delighted at his success in winning Afghan support than he was in gaining Russian backing, and thereby he persisted in and intensified his siege of Horat.<sup>11</sup> At the same time Russia was in favour of an alliance between Persia and the Afghan chiefs of Kabul and Kandhar, under its patronage. In those days a sort of triangular contest between England, Russia and Persia had become a normal feature of Central Asian politics. After 1828 in Tehran the Russian influence steadily increased when Persia saw England abandoning her to fight a single-handed battle. The first outward sign of the growing Russian influence was the siege of Horat. For a long time a state of indecision prevailed in England. It was only when Macnair's request for some positive decisions became persistent and gave a dismal picture of British position that Palmerston decided to act. At St. Petersburg

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10 Sir John Macnair, Progress and Present Position of Russia (London, 1854), pp. 100-104.

11 Florence Macalister, Memoir of the Rt. Hon. Sir John Macnair (London, 1910), p. 23.

Palmerston's vigorous protests secured Simonitch's recall.

From 1842 until the death of Muhammad Shah in 1848 the politics of Persia did not interest India. The Ministers in London were averse to any deep interest in Persia, and certainly against any military move, because Russia took no major initiative in relation to Persia. Britain's interest in Persia, after the 1857 revolt, came to be based on the necessity to maintain and consolidate her imperial position in India.<sup>12</sup> British Ministers were urging Palmerston to speak to Shah in a very harsh language, at the time of siege to Herat, if not to make some actual demonstration to convince him that "if he knows the way to India we can show him a road leading from Bushire to Ispahan."<sup>13</sup>

Increasing Russian influence over France disturbed the Indian Foreign Office. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, ascendancy of the maritime power was seriously being challenged, from the north by the Heartland power. The restrictive railroad concession in Persia that Britain got in 1890 reflected Russian determination to prevent the construction, by other than her subjects, of railways in Persia.

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12 A.P. Thornton, "British Policy in Persia, 1858-1890", English Historical Review, LXIX (October 1954), pp. 553-555.

13 V.K. Chavda, India, Britain, Russia: 1838-1876 (Delhi, 1967), p. 77.

for fear that they might one day carry British troops to Central Asia.<sup>14</sup> It was confidently asserted that Russian policy towards Persia involved as a major promise the annexation of the whole of north Persia.<sup>15</sup> Since the British first became conscious of Russia as a rival in Central Asia, the Government of British India attempted to surround India with a ring of buffer states, designed to insulate the Indian Empire from contact with an European power.<sup>16</sup> Durand felt that the British position at Tehran would be reinforced if Russia was warned that aggressive action on her part in the north would provoke similar action on the part of England in the south. By the close of the century Russia had built strategic railways in trans-Caspian and had constructed a road from Rasht to Tehran which gave her a most important advantage both from a commercial and military point of view. More alarming was the appearance of Russian agents on Central and Coastal regions where they surveyed potential harbours and established relations with the local functionaries.<sup>17</sup> Access to the Gulf was the

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- 14 V. Chirol, The Middle Eastern Question (London, 1903) Chapter V & VI, and see A.T. Wilson, The Persian Gulf (London, 1954), pp. 250-259.
- 15 G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Gulf (London, 1892), vol. II, pp. 590-594.
- 16 R.L. Greaves, Persia and the Defence of India, 1834-1892 (London, 1959), pp. 135-140.
- 17 J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia (Calcutta, 1915), vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 2110-24.

basic motivation behind Russian policy and England read an ominous meaning in the peregrinations of Russian agents along the littoral. For example, Peter the Great, who supposedly guided Russian statesmen, said, "Hasten the decadence of Persia, penetrate to the Persian Gulf, re-establish the ancient commerce of the Levant, and advance to the Indies which are the treasure house of the world."<sup>18</sup>

Durand's despatch to the Government of India was the most comprehensive analysis in historical context of Britain's position in Persia at the century's end.<sup>19</sup> It was in the strategic implications more than economic implications, that Persia assumed a more significant aspect. Its eastern frontiers were coterminous with Afghanistan, a State whose borders were guaranteed by England, and Baluchistan, a British protectorate. Its northern coast was washed by the waters of the Gulfs of Persia and Oman, control over which was essential for the security of India. No Indian administration could view with equanimity the preponderance of an European power over Persia, considering the access such preponderance would give to avenues of exercising pressure over the subcontinent. Russian pressure rested on the contiguity of her southern frontier with Persia's

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18 Quoted in G.N. Curzon, n. 15, p. 601; see also Appendix I.

19 J.C. Hurcwitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East 1535-1914 (New York, 1956), vol. I, p. 219.

northern frontier. Similarly, the basis of British power lay in her naval supremacy over the Persian Gulf. The de jure position of the Gulf was that of a sea open to the flags of all nations. But its de facto position was different. The Gulf was a British preserve, and it would have to be maintained as one. A Russian base in it would impose a crippling burden on the resources of India, which were, as it was, proving unequal to the requirements of a defence build up maintained to neutralise the proximity of Russia towards the north and the northeast. This was the framework of Lord Curzon's thinking regarding the Persian problem.

In common with Durand, Curzon rejected the possibility of an Anglo-Russian understanding with regards to Persia. But Curzon thought it worthwhile to attempt, in collaboration with Russia, a demarcation of spheres of influence in Persia. British interests were concentrated in the southern and central Persia; Russian interests, on the other hand, concerned north. Curzon proposed that a line drawn from Khanikin through Kermanshah, Hamadar, Karbin and Yazd to Suistan could be taken to represent the boundary between the English and Russian spheres of interest.

During Viceregal tour to the Gulf in November 1903, Curzon explained the reasons of why Great Britain monopolize the Gulf: "The History of your states is the answer. He were



here before any other power. We found strife and we have created order. The Empire of India, which is our duty to defend, lies almost at your gates. We are not going to throw away this century of costly and triumphant enterprise; we shall not wipe out the most unselfish pages in history. The peace of these waters must be maintained; your independence will continue to be upheld; and the influence of the British Government must remain supreme."<sup>20</sup> And, with her naval vulnerability, Russia was reluctant to establish a base in the Gulf; thus assuring Indian predominance.

Once the northern approaches to Hindu Kush had been diplomatically sealed, there remained for the British the problem of hammering out a permanent political settlement out of the mountains, which would satisfy defensive needs with minimum of expense. The phase of settlement in tribal territories was from 1894 to 1895.<sup>21</sup> This means that settlement in Afghanistan was evidently linked up with the settlement with Russia in Central Asia. Settlement in Afghanistan would not have been possible without the settlement with Russians.

Durand at Kabul had negotiated a line between Afghan and Indian territory which excluded the Amir from Chitral,

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20 Text of Speech by Lord Curzon in Durbar abroad the Argonant, 21 November 1903, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, vol. I, pp. 2638-39.

21 G.J. Alder, n. 6, p. 287.

although leaving him in possession of Acomar. The Chitral Settlement of 1895 finally recognised that the defensive centre of gravity on the northern frontier lay in Chitral and not at Gilgit. The Gilgit garrison was reduced and the bulk of forces were concentrated either in Chitral, on the Malakand Pass, or along the Swat River. In 1896, the anomalous subordination of the Chitral Political Officer was ended, and in 1914, Chitral recovered control of the Mastuj and Yanin districts.<sup>22</sup>

The Chitral Settlement, "taken in conjunction with the Pamir Agreement of the same year and the earlier Hunza, Nagar and Chilas arrangements, it really makes the end of formative era of British policy on the northern frontier. A measure of stability was achieved, both north and south of the Hindu Kush which lasted until the end of British dominion itself half a century later. 1895 was the end of an era in another sense too, for when the British and Russian surveys, carried up from baselines thousands of miles apart, met on the Pamirs that year with an error of only a few feet between them, the period when exploration could alter strategic concepts really came to an end."<sup>23</sup>

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22 For the complete discussion of the crisis about Chitral and Gilgit, see G.J. Alder, n. 6, pp. 289-298.

23 G.J. Alder, n. 6, p. 298.

The era of exploration and discovery in this region may now be said to have come to an end. "The boundaries having been determined, there survives no legitimate cause of political quarrel; and the mystery and romance of the fabled Roof of the World has been extinguished by the theodolite and the compass and superseded by the accurate delimitation of scientific maps."<sup>24</sup> This was a befitting comment on the whole of northern frontier region. But 1895 was certainly the end of the period when the world of explorers, anthropologists, archaeologists, mountaineers, geologists and geographers had a special value in the formation of British concepts in India's northern frontier problems.

From 1865 to 1895 the Indian Government was maintaining on the northern frontier what was in effect an inner and an outer set of buffers against any contact between the Russian frontier and the limits of direct British administrative control. Despite the enormous difficulties of the proxy buffer policy, the Indian authorities were completely successful in their prime aim of avoiding contiguity and of keeping Russia back from the Hindu Kush Passes. Afghan and Chinese territories were joined in 1895, on the Pamirs in a barrier, which survives unchanged to this day. After 1895 the Russians

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24 Lord George Nathaniel Curzon, The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus (London, 1897), p. 83.

could never again hope to win an uncontested footing south of the mountains. The various listening posts in the vast system of natural defences which kept silent and eternal watch over the teeming plains of Hindustan saw to that.<sup>25</sup>

This settlement brought about an immense improvement in the security system of the maritime based British Commonwealth Empire, especially in its most vital and remote frontier. It matured into a stable foreign policy of Buffer States System, which has been practised even by the post-independence Governments of India.

**CHAPTER VIII**

**CONCLUSION**

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Geopolitical peninsularity was the major factor in Indianizing the British Indian Empire. While it made India "the base and bastion" of the British colonial system, even in British world maps the region was depicted as "Indign Empire."<sup>1</sup>

Great Britain considered India the real prize of the coloured empire. It could not have established the empire without India. India was the centre or pivot of Britain's empire in the East. And for this reason alone, setting aside all other consideration, the Government of India had an "independent" foreign policy, with a view to safeguard India's security and national interests.

Russia's eastward expansion increasingly dominated Anglo-Indian strategic thinking in the late nineteenth century. The entire bogey of Russophobia was the creation of chauvinistic English military generals, geopoliticians, diplomats and journalists, who constantly advocated further consolidation and expansion of the British empire, and feared that Russia was their primary global rival. Russophobia was then the driving force underlying British foreign policy. Geographical ignorance of the region contributed to this growing sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Corrolli Barnett, The Collapse of British Power (London, 1972) pp. 646-47.

Russian menace. Russophobia was primarily of political origin. Britain did not want to follow the policy of appeasement with Russia, as it would have created doubts that England feared to face the Russians. The real danger for Britain lay not in Russian power but in fading away of the impression of its invincibility from the minds of the inhabitants of India.

In the second half of the 19th century the focal point of British colonial policy was "the Eastern Question", i.e. the struggle for inheriting the decaying Ottoman Empire. Russia was the principal enemy in the Near and Middle East. It was Russia rather than any other European power that menaced the balance of power in the East. The failure of the two governments to arrive at some agreement for the division of East into spheres of influence was the primary cause of Anglo-Soviet conflict.

Russian threat to Indian security may be traced as far back as 1812 when the will of Peter the Great was published. Russian menace was inherent in the basic character of Russian diplomacy. Every kingdom, principality, or tribe to which Russians had extended "protection" had eventually been appropriated into the Muscovite Empire.

In 1856 a scheme for the invasion of India was prepared by General P. Duhamel and presented to the Tsar. Russophobists argued that the aim of Russia was to advance into Central Asia with the object of squeezing Britain in

India, through Afghanistan.

As Constantinople was Russia's aim in Europe, so India was the prize she coveted in Asia. Peter the Great is reported to have said in his Will, "Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. He who establishes himself in these two places will be the true sovereign of the world."

Catherine II proposed earlier in the year 1791 to issue a manifesto declaring her intention of going to the aid of the Great Mogul and to bring Russian army to restore his power. In the phase after Tilsit (1807), Napoleon again revived the plan of an invasion of India in co-operation with Russia.

The long drawn out Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia was nothing but a race to gain greater advantage by quicker and better control of strategic positions in Persia, Afghanistan and Central Asian principalities. The more powerful Russia became in Central Asia, the weaker did England become in India, and consequently, the more amenable in Europe. Many British statesmen were of the opinion that it was in Europe that the battle of Afghanistan most probably would ultimately be fought.

A conflict between East and West for the domination of the old world was imminent. Slavs and Saxons contended for supremacy, and upon the skill and determination of the



two opponents hanged the future not only of Asia but also of Europe. It was the clearest exposition of the geopolitical legacy of the northern Indian frontier regions, that there was an eternal conflict between Indian Empire and Russian Empire, for the domination of adjoining principalities.

The Pamir demarcation represented a genuine compromise. A very important effect of this compromise was the Anglo-Russian entente of 1907 and it was based almost on the removal of old rivalries in Central Asia. Anglo-Russian settlement of 1895 played its very important role in the shifting of alliances which preceded the outbreak of war in Europe nearly twenty years later. It in itself is the testimony of the correctness and foresightedness of British concepts of northern Indian frontier problems.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### THE WILL OF PETER THE GREAT

As given in "Des Progres de la Puissance Russe," by M. Losur; published in Paris in 1812.

I. Neglect nothing which can introduce European manners and customs into Russia, and with this object gain the co-operation of the various Courts, and especially the learned men of Europe, by means of interesting speculations, by philanthropic and philosophical principles, or by any other suitable means.

II. Maintain the State in a condition of perpetual war, in order that the troops may be inured to warfare, and so that the whole nation may always be kept in training and ready to march at the first signal.

III. Extend our dominions by every means on the north along the Baltic, as well as towards the south along the shores of the Black Sea; and for this purpose :-

IV. Excite the jealousy of England, Denmark, and Brandenburg against the Swedes, by means of which those Powers will disregard any encroachments we may make on that State, and which we will end by subjugating.

V. Interest the House of Austria in the expulsion of the Turk from Europe, and under this pretext maintain a permanent army and establish dockyards on the shores of the Black Sea, and thus, by ever moving forward, we will eventually reach Constantinople.

VI. Keep up a state of anarchy in Poland, influence the national assemblies, and above all regulate the election of its kings; split it up on every occasion that presents itself, and finally subjugate it.

VII. Enter into a close alliance with England, and maintain direct relations with her by means of a good commercial treaty; allow her even to exercise a certain monopoly in the interior of the State, so that a good understanding may be by degrees established between the English merchants and sailors and ours, who on their part are in favour of everything which tends to perfect and strengthen the Russian navy, by aid of which it is necessary to at once strive for mastery over the Baltic and in the Black Sea - the keystone on which the speedy success of the scheme depends.

VIII. Bear in mind that the commerce of India is the commerce of the world, and that he who can exclusively command it is dictator of Europe. No occasion should therefore be lost to provoke war with Persia, to hasten its decay, to advance on the Persian Gulf, and then to endeavour to re-establish the ancient trade of the Levant through Syria.

IX. Always interfere, either by force of arms or by intrigue, in the quarrels of the European Powers, and especially in those of Germany; and with this object :-

X. Sook after and maintain an alliance with Austria, encourage her in her favourite idea of national predominance, profit by the slightest ascendancy gained over her to entangle her in disastrous wars, so that she may be gradually weakened; even help her sometimes; but incessantly stir up against her the enmity of the whole of Europe, but particularly of Germany, by rousing the jealousy and distrust of the German princes.

XI. Always select wives for Russian princes from among the German princesses, so that by thus multiplying alliances based on close relationship and mutual interest, we will increase our influence over that Empire.

XII. Make use of the power of the Church over the disunited and schismatical Greeks who are scattered over Hungary, Turkey, and the southern parts of Poland, gain them over by every possible means, pose as their protectors, and establish a claim to religious supremacy over them. Under this pretext, and with their help, Turkey will be conquered, and Poland, unable any longer to stand alone, either by its own strength or by means of political connections, will voluntarily place itself in subjection to us.

XIII. From that time every moment will be precious to us. All our batteries must be secretly prepared to strike the great blow, and so that they can strike with such order, precision, and rapidity as to give Europe no time for

preparation. The first step will be to propose very secretly and with the greatest circumspection, first to the Court of Versailles and then to that of Vienna, to divide with one of them the Empire of the World; and by mentioning that Russia is virtually ruler of the Eastern World, and has nothing to gain but the title, this proposal will probably not arouse their suspicion. It is undoubted that this project cannot fail to please them, and war will be kindled between them which will soon become general, both on account of the connections and widespread relationships between these two rival courts and natural enemies, and because of the interests which will compel the other Powers of Europe to take part in the struggle.

XIV. In the midst of this general discord, Russia will be asked for help, first by one and then by another of the belligerent powers, and having hesitated long enough to give them time to exhaust themselves, and to enable her to assemble her own armies, she will at last appear to decide in favour of the House of Austria, and while she pushes her irregular troops forward to the Rhine, she will at once follow them up with the hordes of Asia; and as they advance into Germany, two large fleets filled with a portion of the same hordes must set sail, one from the Sea of Azoff and the other from the port of Archangel, under convoy of war vessels from the Black Sea and Baltic. They will suddenly appear in the Mediterranean and Northern Ocean, and inundate



Italy, Spain, and France with these fierce and rapacious nomads, who will plunder a portion of the inhabitants, carry off others into slavery to re-people the deserts of Siberia, and render the remainder incapable of escaping from our yoke. All these distractions will afford such great opportunities to the regular troops, that they will be able to act with a degree of energy and precision which will ensure the subjugation of the rest of Europe.

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Source: Archibald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: The Struggle for Asia (New York and London, 1900) pp. 238-242.

## APPENDIX II

### RUSSIA'S PROGRAMME IN CENTRAL ASIA

One of Prince Gortchakoff's earliest circulars, dated the 9th (N.S. 21st) of November, 1864, to the British Government, gives so clear an insight into the policy of Russia, more specially when studied by the light of recent events, that it is worth while to bring its principal passages prominently before the English reader.

The following give the pith and substance of this remarkable State Paper :-

"The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilised States which are brought into contact with half-savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organisation.

"In such cases it always happens that the more civilised State is forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character makes most undesirable neighbours.

"First, there are raids and acts of pillage to be put down. To put a stop to them, the tribes on the frontier have to be reduced to a state of more or less perfect submission. This result once attained, these tribes take to more peaceful habits, but are in their turn exposed to the attacks of the more distant tribes.

"The State is bound to defend them against those depredations, and to punish those who commit them. Hence the necessity of distant, costly, and periodically-recurring expeditions against an enemy whom his social organisation makes it impossible to seize. If, the robbers once punished, the expedition is withdrawn, the lesson is soon forgotten; its withdrawal is put down to weakness. It is a peculiarity of Asiatics to respect nothing but visible and palpable force; the moral force of reason and of the interests of civilisation has as yet no hold upon them. The work has then always to be done over again from the beginning.

"In order to put a stop to this state of permanent disorder, fortified posts are established in the midst of these hostile tribes, and an influence is brought to bear upon them which reduces them by degrees to a state of more or less forced submission. But soon beyond this second line, other still more distant tribes, come in their turn to threaten the same dangers, and necessitate the same measures of repression. The State thus finds itself forced to choose one of two alternatives—either to give up this endless labour and to abandon its frontier to perpetual disturbance, rendering all prosperity, all security, all civilisation an impossibility, or, on the other hand, to plunge deeper and deeper into barbarous countries, where the difficulties and expenses increase with every step in advance.

"Such has been the fate of every country which has

found itself in a similar position. The United States in America, France in Algeria, Holland in her colonies, England in India - all have been irresistibly forced, less by ambition than by imperious necessity, into this onward march, where the greatest difficulty is to know where to stop.

"Such, too, have been the reasons which have led the Imperial Government to take up at first a position resting on one side on the Syr-Darya, on the other on the lake of Issyk-Kul, and to strengthen these two lines by advanced forts, which, little by little, have crept on into the heart of those distant regions, without, however, succeeding in establishing on the other side of our frontiers that tranquility which is indispensable for their security.

"The explanation of this unsettled state of things is to be found, first, in the fact that between the extreme points of this double line there is an immense unoccupied space, where all attempts at colonisation or caravan trade are paralysed by the inroads of the robber tribes; and, in the second place, in the perpetual fluctuations of the political condition of those countries where Turkostan and Khokand, sometimes united, sometimes at variance, always at war, either with one another or with Bokhara, presented no chance of settled relations, or of any regular transactions whatever.

"The Imperial Government thus found itself, in spite of all its efforts, in the dilemma we have above alluded to,

that is to say, compelled either to permit the continuance of a state of permanent disorder, paralysing to all security and progress, or to condemn itself to costly and distant expeditions leading to no practical result and with the work always to be done anew; or, lastly, to enter upon the undefined path of conquest and annexation which has given to England the Empire of India, by attempting the subjugation by armed force, one after another, of the small independent States whose habits of pillage and turbulence, and whose perpetual revolts, leave their neighbours neither peace nor repose.

"Neither of these alternative courses was in accordance with the object of our august master's policy, which consists not in extending beyond all reasonable bounds the regions under his sceptre, but in giving a solid basis to his rule, in guaranteeing their security, and in developing their social organisation, their commerce, their well-being and their civilisation.

"Our task was, therefore, to discover a system adapted to the attainment of this threefold object.

"The following principles have, in consequence, been laid down :-

"1. It has been judged to be indispensable that our two fortified lines, one extending from China to the lake of Issyk-Kul, the other from the sea of Aral along the Syr-Darya,

should be united by fortified points, so that all our posts should be in a position of mutual support, leaving no gap through which the nomad tribes might make their inroads and depredations with impunity.

"2. It was essential that the line of our advanced forts thus completed should be situated in a country fertile enough not only to insure their supplies, but also to facilitate the regular colonisation, which alone can prepare a future of stability and prosperity for the occupied country by gaining over the neighbouring population to civilised life.

"3. And lastly. It was urgent to lay down this line definitely, so as to escape the danger of being carried away, as it is almost inevitable, by a series of repressive measures and reprisals into an unlimited extension of territory.

"To attain this end, a system had to be established which should depend not only on reason, which may be elastic, but on geographical and political conditions which are fixed and permanent.

"This system was suggested to us by a very simple fact, the result of experience, namely, that the nomad tribes, which can either be seized nor punished, nor effectually kept in order, are our most inconvenient neighbours; while on the other hand, agricultural and commercial populations

attached to the soil, and possessing a more advanced social organisation, offer every chance of gaining neighbours with whom there is a possibility of entering into relations.

"Consequently our frontier line ought to swallow up the former and stop short at the limit of the latter.

"These three principles supply a clear, natural, and logical explanation of our last military operations in Central Asia. In fact, our original frontier line extending along the Syr-Darya to Fort Poroffsky on one side, and on the other to the lake Issyk-Kul, had the drawback of being almost on the verge of the desert. It was broken by a wide gap between the two extreme points; it did not offer sufficient resources to our troops; it left unsettled tribes over the border, with which any settled arrangement became impossible.

"In spite of our unwillingness to extend our frontier, these motives had been powerful enough to induce the Imperial Government to establish this line between Lake Issyk-Kul and the Syr-Darya by fortifying the town of Tchinkent, lately occupied by us. By the adoption of this line we obtain a double result. In the first place, the country it takes in its is fertile, well wooded, and watered by numerous watercourses; it is partly inhabited by various Khirghiz tribes which have already accepted our rule; it consequently offers favourable conditions for colonisation and the supply

of provisions to our garrisons. In the second place, it puts us in the immediate neighbourhood of the agricultural and commercial populations of Khokand. We find ourselves in the presence in a more solid and compact, less unsettled, and better organised social state, fixed for us, with geographical precision, the limit up to which we are bound to advance, and at which we must halt, because, while on the one hand any further extension of our rule, meeting, as it would, no longer with unstable communities such as the nomad tribes, but with more regularly constituted States, would entail considerable exertions, and would draw us on from annexation to annexation with unforeseen complications; on the other, with such States for our future neighbours, their backward civilisation and the instability of their political condition do not shut us out from the hope that the day may come when regular relations may, to the advantage of both parties, take the place of the permanent troubles which have up to the present moment paralysed all progress in those countries.

"Such are the interests which inspire the policy of our august master in Central Asia.

"It is needless for me to lay stress upon the interest which Russia evidently has not to increase her territory, and, above all, to avoid raising complications on her frontiers, which can but delay and paralyse her domestic development.



"The programme which I have just traced is in accordance with these views.

"Very frequently of late years the civilisation of those countries, which are her neighbours on the continent of Asia, has been assigned to Russia as her special permission.

"No agent has been found more apt for the progress of civilisation than commercial relations. Their development requires everywhere order and stability, but in Asia it demands a complete transformation of the habits of the people. The first thing to be taught to the population of Asia is that they will gain more in favouring and protecting the caravans trade than in robbing them. These elementary ideas can only be accepted by the public where one exists, that is to say, where there is some organised form of society, and a Government to direct and represent it.

"We are accomplishing the first part of our task in carrying our frontier to the limit where the indispensable conditions are to be found.

"The second we shall accomplish in making every effort henceforward to prove to our neighbouring States, by a system of firmness in the repression of their misdoeds, combined with moderation and justice in the use of our strength, and respect for their independence, that Russia is not their enemy, that she entertains towards them no idea of conquest, and that peaceful and commercial relations with her are more profitable than disorder, pillage, reprisals.

and a permanent state of war.

"The Imperial Cabinet, in assuming this task, takes as its guide the interests of Russia. But it believes that at the same time it is promoting the interests of humanity and civilisation. It has a right to expect that the line of conduct it pursues, and the principles which guide it, will meet with a just and candid appreciation.

"(Signed) Gortchakow."

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Source: Demetrius Charles Boulger, England and Russia in Central Asia (London, 1879), vol. I, pp. 318-25.