

The Great Game, 1856-1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia

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Author: Evgeny Sergeev

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Overview

In *The Great Game, 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia*, Evgeny Sergeev –Professor of History and Head of the Center for the Study of 20th-Century Socio-Political and Economic Problems within the Institute of World History at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow – makes a substantial, indeed impressive and welcome, if at times eclipsed and provocative, contribution to the historical study of the ‘Great Game’ played out on the ‘chess-board’ of Asia by Russia and Britain amidst a host of other supportive as well as not-so-supportive actors in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The work situates itself primarily within the fields of diplomatic history and the history of international relations, with contributions to the fields of military and strategic, (comparative) colonial and post-colonial, transnational, world and global historical, as well as Middle Eastern, Central Asian, South Asian, and East Asian studies, among others.

With most of the scholarship on the Great Game having emerged from the Cold War, revisiting the Great Game via such a careful sifting of the sources is justified, in the author’s mind, not simply by recent access to formerly inaccessible archives, but more importantly by the need to help correct ‘a distorted image of Russia in the West’ as well as ‘an imprecise perception of the Occidental countries by many Russians’ still lingering in the post-Soviet period (p. 2). Sergeev is especially concerned to subvert understandings in which the Great Game is viewed as “‘a Victorian cold war’” (p. 347) serving as ‘a prelude to the Cold War’. This is particularly the case when such approaches are framed as a Huntingtonian ‘clash of civilizations’, ‘a permanent Cold War between Slavdom and the West’ (p. 12) whose origins are traced to ‘a dramatic’ and apparently irreconcilable ‘difference between Russian and Western belief systems’ (p. 9). This holds true in spite of the author’s contention that ‘[t]he Great Game deserves to be remembered as making a highly significant contribution ... to ... the general contour of world politics in the twentieth century’ (p. 347), namely that ‘long-standing political alliances began to replace the fragile ad hoc coalitions of states in international affairs that had been typical of the so-called Vienna world order throughout the nineteenth century’ (p. 328). It also helped ‘elucidate geographical motives in the struggle for world leadership’, solidify ‘classification of international state systems’, engender such modern geopolitical terms as “‘buffer

state,” “scientific frontier,” and “sphere of influence” (or “interests”), and bring ‘into diplomatic practice the concepts of détente and entente’ (pp. 7, 347).

The subject of study should not, therefore, be simplified to its strictly political or economic aspects (pp. 8-9), viewed primarily ‘through the prism of either military planning or espionage’ (p. 10), or ‘reduced to expeditions of explorers or intelligence operations’ (p. 344), as it has been in most Cold War and even more recent post-Cold War works (cf. also the influence of Kipling’s interpretation, p. 6). Feminist approaches which portray it as a ‘network of men’s clubs that reinforced the spatial and social barriers separating the sexes’ (p. 10) are, likewise, insufficient. It is, instead, a complex narrative which needs to be re-constructed according to three, possibly four, ‘interrelated dimensions’: 1- ‘the competition for goods and capital investments in the preindustrial Asian markets’; 2- a competition between two distinct ‘models of early globalization’, namely the two main empires of Russia and Great Britain which both aimed to integrate ‘non-European decadent societies’ into their domains of rule socially, politically, and economically; 3- ‘as a complex, multilevel decision-making and decision-implementing activity directed by their ruling elites’; and 4- as a vital era in the history of Russo-British relations across Eurasia which ‘precipitated their consequent rapprochement and military alliance in World War I’ (pp. 5, 13).

Regarding the last of these, Sergeev paints the broad outlines of Russo-British relations in the post-Crimean War (i.e. post-1856) period as marked by re-emerging tensions in the late 1850s down to the mid-1860s (1), moving toward ‘peaceful coexistence’ by the early 1870s, becoming aggravated again, to the point at times of serious potential for war, during the late 1880s (particularly 1877–88). Relations then return to ‘peaceful coexistence’ in the mid-1890s, with ‘a final tottering on the brink of war’ in the early 1900s leading to their ultimate and lasting rapprochement between December 1905 and August 1907 when, in the author’s view, the Great Game came to an official close (pp. 298, 305, 315, 343). Thus the author – contra multiple other interpretations which place its beginning as far back as 1757 and its end as late as 1991 (pp. 8, 13–14) – emphatically dates the Great Game as falling precisely within the period 1856–1907. Throughout the entire period, and notwithstanding other aims and motives, Britain’s primary objective remained safeguarding the ‘jewel in her crown’, India, while Russia kept ever in view access to strategic oceanic waterways, whether through the Black Sea, the Persian Gulf, or the Pacific.

A ‘combination of six key driving forces put this process in motion’: the cessation of the Caucasus War (1828–59) releasing Russian troops to Central Asia, ‘the Sepoy Mutiny’ (1857–8) and its consequences, the Second Opium War (1856–60) in China, the Anglo-Persian War (1856–7), the end of British and beginning of Russian territorial expansionism in relation to processes of industrialization in the mid-1800s, and the American Civil War (1861–5) which sent Britain and Russia in search of alternative sources of cotton. Additionally, ‘the first world economic crisis of 1857–58’ pushed Britain into Asian markets ‘to compensate for Britain’s deficit in its balance of payments with continental Europe and America’ (pp. 14–15).

Against the above backdrop, the author begins his work by offering a ‘selected chronology’ running from 1856 to 1907 (pp. xiii–xix). This proves a helpful reference while moving through the book since he does not take a strictly chronological approach, but regularly revisits the same time periods in relation to each main geographical region covered.

The introduction is aimed at ‘Reconsidering Anglo-Russian relations in Asia’ (pp. 1–22) by moving through the post-Cold War need to study ‘the Great Game’ (pp. 1–2), various definitions and understandings of the phrase within the history of its study in both Western and Russian traditions (pp. 2-13), the author’s purpose and aims (pp. 3 and 13), debates over ‘the chronological frame of the Great Game’ (pp. 13–18), a working definition of ‘the geographical frames’ (pp. 18–19), and a description of the research project and the sources consulted, along with other miscellaneous clarifications concerning monetary units, calendars, etc. (pp. 19–22). The quintessence of all this has been distilled in the introductory overview above.

‘Chapter one: the prologue of the Great Game’ (pp. 23–64) opens with coverage of ‘Russian and British motives in their advances into Asia’ (pp. 24–35), arguing that though economic and Christian civilizing aims

are present, it was predominantly geostrategic motives grounded in 'the quest for natural, or "scientific", frontiers above all' which shaped both Russian and British foreign policy in Asia in the initial stages of the Game (pp. 23, 63). Following from this are the 'Profiles of the Game's players' (pp. 35–49) 'who', the author tells us, 'fell into three main categories': 'monarchs and high-standing bureaucrats', 'military and diplomatic agents in the state's service', and 'explorers, journalists, and other freelancers, who often acted at their own risk' (p. 23). Asian nationals played their role as well, employed within the ranks of each empire 'as surveyors, scouts, and secret informants' (p. 49). These included, among others, not only (those posing as) Muslim merchants, but even Siberian and Mongolian Buddhist monks on sacred pilgrimage to Tibet (pp. 250–9, 270–1). Chapter one closes with the provocative suggestion that the primary role of the Asian nations within the Great Game's prologue (and throughout) was that of 'decadent Oriental states' being incorporated 'into the global system of relations' forged by 'the great powers' (p. 23; see critique below).

Chapter two (pp. 65–104) portrays 'the military party at the Tsarist court and the so-called forwardists among the British ruling elite' (p. 66) as those bearing primary responsibility for the start of the Great Game in the aftermath of the Crimean (1853–6) and Caucasus (1828–59) wars. It was they who dictated the outlines of 'Russia's challenge and Britain's response, 1856–1864', with the former pressing Russia's agenda in Central Asia and related war plans against British India, orchestrated around Russian political missions to Asian countries which ushered in a new season of strained relations between the two empires (see esp. pp. 65–7). On the Russian side, the author seems to pin sizeable blame on the Russian need to save face after their Crimean defeat as the catalyst which 'finally overruled the cautious policy that Saint Petersburg had pursued in Central Asia during the Caucasian War and Crimean War in the first half of the 19th century' (p. 94). But ultimately it was both Tsarist militants and British 'forwardists' together who squandered 'an opportunity to make a new, peaceful start in their relationship' in the post-Crimean War period, an opportunity provided by, among other factors, the accession of Alexander II (1855–81) who had surrendered to the British (French, and Ottomans) in the Crimean War and then launched into his Westernizing economic, social, and political reforms (p. 66).

'Chapter three: the road to the Oxus, 1864–1873' (pp. 105–48) outlines the Russian conquest of the three primary Central Asian states of Khokand, Bokhara, and Khiva, resulting in the establishment of Russian Turkestan and moving Russia within striking distance of India. Amidst the conquest, complex networks of relations are highlighted between the Central Asian states, British India, and the Ottoman Empire, facilitated in part by a pan-Islamic movement which sometimes worked to one or the other imperial power's favor, and at other times to the potential detriment of both (p. 117). These networks extended into Eastern (later called Chinese) Turkestan with its center at Kashgar where Yakub Beg, taking advantage of the region's destabilization through fallout from the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64), took power in this period only to become a pawn in the Great Game (pp. 133–42). But while 'the political crisis in Chinese Turkestan contributed to the general deterioration of not only Russo-Chinese but also Russo-British relations' (p. 142), it was the Russian conquest of Khiva which, above all, compelled Britain to undertake 'a fundamental rethinking' of the defence of India (p. 142). Up until this time, Britain had been vacillating between "Masterly Inactivity" and "Imbecility", uncertain as to whether or not they should be seriously concerned by the Russian conquest of Central Asia (pp. 125–33). Most importantly, however, 'the first, fragile seeds of future collaboration had been planted' via 'the Gorchakov-Granville compromise' of 1873, which would not only serve as a reference point for later negotiations (cf. e.g. p. 223), but 'anticipated the forthcoming end' of rivalry between Russia and Britain over Asia (pp. 106, 148).

With chapter four comes 'The climax of the Great Game, 1874–1885' (pp. 149–210), marking its highpoint, not its end. This was reached between 1884–5 in the 'strategic stalemate' which resulted in a 'fragile equilibrium' through negotiations over boundaries and spheres of influence in Afghanistan and Persia which were finalized in 1887 (why then 1885?) after Russia finally realized that, all practical matters considered, they would have to abandon their very real and strategically-prepared decades-long war plans to attack British India. Thus, Russia maintained 'their strategic position in Central Asia' while their 'threat to India as well as Britain's menace to Turkestan lost pressing urgency'. And with this, 'the focus of the Great Game gradually shifted to other parts of Asia – the Pamirs, Tibet, and Manchuria' (pp. 209–10). But not before

Russia annexed in 1881–5 the last remaining independent Central Asian region lying in between –Turkmenia – thereby contributing to the urgency of negotiations. 'The fall of the Liberal Cabinet in June 1885' in Britain, 'German intrigues' destabilizing Europe and threatening the Middle East, and 'the French peril in Africa' all played their part in bringing about this temporary rapprochement (p. 209; cf. p. 237), but only after tensions had originally been aggravated a decade earlier by the Russian annexation of Khokand (1875–6) and the related vying for power across the mountains in neighboring Kashgaria (pp. 159–72).

Chapter five further elucidates how the 'Strategic stalemate, 1886–1903' (pp. 211–74) initially reached between 1884–7 was worked out in, first, 'the scramble for the Pamirs, which Britain, Russia, and China, along with the emir of Afghanistan, conducted throughout the 1880s and 1890s' (p. 214). Here both Russia and China in particular claimed rights to dominion based on past historic precedents, while Britain strategically supported China against Russia, gaining economic concessions for themselves along the way (pp. 213–15). Down closer to sea-level, it was in 'the final round of the Great Game at the western approaches to India' that 'the Admiralty proposed introducing a two-power standard which was to become the famous core of British naval policy for the next forty years', all as a response to potential Russian naval power approaching India via the Mediterranean, Black, or Caspian seas (p. 233). Meanwhile, back up in Tibet, Russia aimed to 'neutralize' British ability to 'manipulat[e] the adepts of Lamaism' who inhabited the far reaches of Russian 'Siberia, Altai, and Kalmykia'. They sought to accomplish this by employing these very monks in secret spy missions while on their sacred pilgrimages, hoping to gain political leverage in and even form an anti-British alliance with Tibet. This resulted in three Tibetan embassies visiting Saint Petersburg (pp. 249–59, 270–1). Russia also 'endeavored to create a springboard' from Tibet 'for the encirclement of the Qing Empire in the south along with opening a second front against British rule in India in the northeast direction' (p. 252). But all this came to nothing following the controversial conquest of Tibet by the British via Curzon's 1903–4 expedition (pp. 267–9). As for Britain, her main aim turned out to be, not Buddhist inroads into Russia, but the linking of 'India to China via Tibet' (p. 252). Sergeev thus amply demonstrates that this otherwise remote 'Rooftop of the World' 'had no less significance to the rival powers than Persia, Afghanistan, or the khanates of Central Asia' (pp. 211–12, 274). Off in the Far East, concerns developed for the territorial integrity of the Qing Empire in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), with Britain's primary focus being the northern frontiers along the Russo-Chinese borders for obvious reasons (p. 260).

Chapter six (pp. 275–335) heralds 'The end of the Game' ushered in by the ultimate and lasting rapprochement between Russia and Britain. This process began in December 1905 and climaxed in the three Anglo-Russian agreements (misnamed a single 'Convention') of August 1907 which delineated respective spheres of interest in the borderlands between British India and Russian Central Asia – namely Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet (pp. 276, 298, 305, 315; cf. pp. 17, 343). The 'two epochal events' which confirmed and contributed to this end are the emergence of Britain from 'splendid isolation' (1902–7) and the failed attempt by Germany to lead a Franco-German-Russian coalition against Britain in 1905–6 (p. 17). Emerging from all this vying and shifting of relations was 'the diplomatic revolution of 1902–7' which marked 'the crucial turning point in world politics at the onset of the 20th century': the replacement of 'fragile ad hoc coalitions of states in international affairs that had been typical of the so-called Vienna world order throughout the 19th century' with the 'long-standing political alliances' which largely shaped 20th-century world politics (pp. 276, 328–9). While relational dynamics within the Middle East and Inner Asia remained integral to the overall 'struggle for supremacy in Asia', it was in East Asia (in the face of Qing China's demise following especially the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), the resulting Anglo-Japanese alliances (1902, 1905), and the aftermath of Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5)) that Britain and Russia were finally forced to come to the bargaining table (cf. p. 275). The author here contests interpretations of the Russo-Japanese War 'as an event that delayed the start of official Russo-British diplomatic negotiations', insisting 'to the contrary' that it 'accelerated Russo-British rapprochement' due not only to the Tsarist government's concerns over the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but the undermining impact which the Asian (Japanese) victory over a Western (Russian) power had on Western empires, both British and Russian, thus helping drive the two together (p. 308). Concerning 'The Game's final impact on Asian countries' (pp.

329–35), no trace of damage or injustice to them is noted. To the contrary, '[t]his study ... reveals that it would not be fair to ignore the achievements under Russian rule' (p. 332). Even more, '[i]t is disputable whether Russian rule was less progressive than British', a progressiveness which, so we are told, 'even natives' appreciated (pp. 332–3).

The epilogue (pp. 337–48) reviews the course of Russo-British Relations following the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 down to the beginnings of World War I (pp. 337–43), providing also the final conclusions and implications of the study (pp. 343–7). 'A nominal roll of the rulers, statesman, diplomats, and military officers engaged in the Great Game, 1856–1907' (pp. 349–54) serves as a helpful appendix, followed by the 'Notes' (pp. 355–460), 'Selected archival sources and bibliography' (pp. 461–514), and 'Index' (pp. 515–30).

Critique

Breadth and Depth of Sources

Sergeev demonstrates an acquaintance with the Russian sources which far surpasses that of any related work to date, making his contribution invaluable. And this should not distract attention from his impressive depth of knowledge in the English sources as well, not to mention occasional reference to French and German. Conversely, he is entirely lacking in relevant Turkish [\(2\)](#), Persian, Tajik (Farsi), Uzbek, Kazakh [\(3\)](#), Tatar, Hindi, Urdu, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and other Eurasian language sources. While this should properly temper the praise offered on the back cover regarding his 'virtuosity ... across several languages', it should also highlight the necessary interdependence of the global scholarly community in light of such a vast array of sources which few scholars could ever hope to master. While his work cannot, therefore, be counted the final word, Sergeev has, particularly again in reference to the Russian sources, made a vital and lasting contribution to Great Game studies.

World Historical Scope

The work also embraces an impressive world historical scope. We thus encounter how, for example, Russian plans included 'recruitment of a gang of saboteurs from the Irish living in San Francisco to organize a terrorist attack on the harbor of Vancouver in British Canada' (pp. 165–6), or 'relied upon a few local Armenian communities living in India' (p. 78), including 'Armenian priests' (p. 180), or how British plans to aid the Turkmen against the Russians failed due to 'Kurds and Armenians' who 'drastically repulsed any overtures by the emissaries from Calcutta' (p. 191). There is, likewise, 'an incident at Fashoda, an African settlement where British and French expeditionary forces collided in 1898' (p. 234) along with, more broadly, 'the first world economic crisis of 1857–58' (pp. 14–15, 74), the cotton shortage caused by 'the American Civil War of 1861–65' (pp. 15, 30), and 'the economic depression of 1873–96' (p. 150), together with numerous other references to international locations, peoples, and events.

Without detracting from his genuinely impressive mastery of the broader world historical context, I would like to suggest some additional threads which could have enhanced the storyline. Note that *all* of the sources I reference here, and throughout the remainder of this critique, are *not* included in the author's already impressive bibliography – in some cases understandably, in others not as easily so.

First, the author's discussion of the Russian conquest of Central Asia, drawing on essential post-1950s Soviet scholarship, certainly contains reference to political, economic, and religious (especially pan-Islamic) ties between 19th-century India and the Central Asian states. He, nonetheless, could have added greater depth and clarity to the discussion by highlighting how the process of industrialization in both Russia and Britain along with the Russian 'imposition of a state banking infrastructure' in Central Asia 'effectively remov[ed] Indians from their central role in the Central Asian rural credit system' so that 'in just a few short decades, the centuries-old Indian diaspora in Central Asia came to an end' [\(4\)](#). This in turn, I suggest, must have affected the leverage of India in its political and possibly even religious (Islamic) relations with the Central

Asian states, which certainly continued, though with decreasing frequency and economic clout. It must also have impacted the economy and thus even politics of British India, adding to the sense of competition with Russia, not only in general, but particularly in the Central Asian realms.

A good deal more could, likewise, have been said regarding the development and impact of the pan-Islamic and broader pan-Asian movements upon the dynamics of Russo-British and other 'great power' relations. In describing how '[t]here emerged for the first time a perspective on the coalescence of Asian states under Russia's patronage to renounce a British civilizing mission' among 'some native princelings' of India following the Sepoy Uprising of 1857-58 (pp. 73-4), Sergeev offers fair, but limited coverage. He has, for starters, overlooked the fact that '[d]uring the [Sepoy] Mutiny, the British took full advantage of the help they had given to the Ottomans during the Crimean War' by 'not only obtain[ing] permission from the Porte for the passage of their troops to India through Egypt and Suez, but also secur[ing] a proclamation from the Sultan, as Caliph, advising the Indian Muslims not to fight against them', with the proclamation then 'circulated and read in the mosques of India'. While Indian Muslims certainly retained a measure of bitterness toward the British, the Ottoman Sultan's proclamation 'had a remarkable influence over them', so much so that "'in this way the debt that Turkey owed to Great Britain for British support in the Crimean war was paid in full'".⁽⁵⁾ Indeed, with the Sepoy incident leading to the official end of the Mughal Dynasty and, thus, the dethroning of Muslim power in India, Indian Muslims were, more and more, driven to look toward the Ottoman Sultan as the sole Caliph of the Muslim world, as well as the Meccan *ulema* who were also under Ottoman rule, so that in due course debates over 'jihad' against the British as 'infidels' were deemed unnecessary and even un-Islamic by the remaining Muslim leadership in India.⁽⁶⁾

But this is not all. Sergeev's Great Game narrative is simply incomplete without mention of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), a Persian Shia Muslim who was to become the preeminent figurehead of the pan-Islamic movement. Al-Afghani, after completing his theological training in Iran, was journeying in India when the Sepoy Uprising took place. His witnessing of that event led him to launch into a career traveling all around the Middle East, with excursions into Central Asia, promoting the pan-Islamic cause.⁽⁷⁾ The Shia Persian Afghani would eventually be courted by the Sunni Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1908), who himself made significant contributions to Pan-Islamism at time when 'a conscious Pan-Islamic tendency [was] becoming evident in the Porte's policy'.⁽⁸⁾ This coincided with, one, the Balkan crisis of 1875-6 in which 'Ottoman counter measures in Bulgaria created a strong anti-Turkish and anti-Muslim feeling, especially in Britain', and two, the ensuing Russo-Turkish War (1877-8), which hardened Indian Muslim attitudes against the Russians to the point that 'the Government of India was showered with numerous petitions condemning Russian action and demanding British support for the Ottomans'.⁽⁹⁾ But 'Britain, still under the influence of Gladstone's [anti-Ottoman] campaign, chose to remain neutral after the Russian assurance that they would not threaten British interests by occupying Istanbul and the Straits'.⁽¹⁰⁾ Thus, both Britain and Russia, as Christian powers, became the objects of Pan-Islamic scorn across much of the Middle East, Central Asia, and India during the 1870 and 1880s in particular. This is essential, but overlooked material in such a study.

Another important figure missing from Sergeev's narrative is the international Pan-Turkic, Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian collaborator Abdurreshid Ibrahim (1857-1944) who was born in Siberia in a family from Bukhara and educated in the medreses in Kazan, Tatarstan. He not only held aspirations for Kazakh and Turkestani territorial autonomy ⁽¹¹⁾ and significantly influenced the career of Zeki Velidi Togan (1890-1970) – another significant Pan-Turkic, Pan-Islamic leader from Bashkortistan (aka Bashkiria), Central Asia ⁽¹²⁾ – he was instrumental in helping forge alliances between Central Asian, Ottoman, and Japanese reformers in opposition to Russian and British 'Great Game' imperialism across Asia. Thus he published a pamphlet in 1885 in Istanbul entitled *Liva ul-Hamd* to encourage Russian Muslims to emigrate to Turkey, later himself emigrating there from Ufa, Bashkortistan in 1894, though continuing to travel back and forth between Russian Central Asia and the Ottoman realms.⁽¹³⁾ Then, in 1902, the same year as the first Anglo-Japanese Alliance, he made his first visit to Japan. This would later result in the relocation of some 5000 Tatar (along with some Bashkir and other Central Asian Turkic) Muslims to Japan during and after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, the establishment of a small Muslim community and literature

press as well as an Islamic Studies initiative in Japan, and a continuing alliance between the Japanese Pan-Asianists and Middle Eastern as well as Central Asian Pan-Islamists, with the latter coming from both Russia and northern China. The Muslim community in Japan and their ongoing alliance there with Japanese Pan-Asian groups would continue down to the end of the Second World War. Ibrahim himself had, among others, maintained close ties with Akashi Motojiro, chief Japanese Intelligence Officer for Europe, who is suspected by some of working among Russian Muslims to help instigate the 1905 Revolution.[\(14\)](#)

Meanwhile back in Russia, Great Game developments leading to the Russo-Japanese War and related 1905 Revolution had prompted three All-Russian Muslim Congresses as part of the State Duma sessions instituted during that period, the first in August 1905, the second in January 1906, and the third in late August, early September 1906. These were attended by Muslim delegates representing the Volga Tatars, Crimean Tatars, Azeris, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Bashkir, Lezgin, Dargin, and Chechens.[\(15\)](#) Many (though not all) of them were, like Ibrahim, 'Jadidists', that is, 'new method' Turkic Muslim reformers in Russia. The Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Uzbek, Uighur, and other branches of these Jadid movements had become increasingly active since the 1860s, particularly after the accession of Alexander III in 1881 and the renewed thrust of Russian Orthodox missions legalized by his conservative politics in reversal of Catherine II's 'enlightened' pro-Islamic religious policies, which came under increasing criticism from the 1850s onward due to the Sepoy Uprising and other related events.[\(16\)](#) These Jadidists were all interconnected with the larger Pan-Islamic, Pan-Turkic, Pan-Arab, and Pan-Indian movements flowing between the Russian, Ottoman, Persian, Indian, and northwestern Chinese domains, in many (though not all) cases peacefully and diplomatically seeking cultural and even political autonomy or independence from Britain, Russia, and China.[\(17\)](#) Their peaceful, diplomatic approach is demonstrated by their establishment of educational institutions, open publishing of journals, newspapers, textbooks, and other materials, and attendance of the three Muslim congresses in Saint Petersburg, among other activities. A number of those participating in the Jadid movements and State Dumas were top intellectuals functioning as 'statespersons' on behalf of Russia's Muslims.

Apart however from brief, passing reference to 'Pan-Islamic dissidents' (p. 332) on several occasions – which are typically equated in Sergeev's mind with a possible 'Muslim uprising' or 'Muslim rebellion in the khanates' representing 'the threat of a Muslim holy war against infidels – jihad' [\(18\)](#) – none of these more nuanced details receives attention in his work. This is not for want of material, whether primary or secondary sources, since proceedings and studies have been published in English and Russian.[\(19\)](#) Nor is it for lack of relevance to his topic, since, for example, in the State Duma meetings the Muslim Congress members addressed issues of 'the government's colonization policy' in Central Asia and the Caucasus, including 'opposition to specific actions on the part of the authorities causing permanent dissatisfaction among frontier peoples, and especially the Kazakhs'. Though unable to introduce them, the Muslim Congress members thus 'prepared two bills "on local self-government in the Caucasus" and "on the position of Kazakh lands"' as part of their attempts to address 'the situation in the national borderlands'.[\(20\)](#) All of this transpired as part of Russia's concern to 'restore the domestic order violated by the Russian Revolution of 1905' which, in turn, drove even the most avid anti-British factions in Russia to agree to 'the urgency' of signing the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (p. 303). Yet Sergeev has no place in his discussion for this. Instead, he portrays it all as only potentially "rebellious Muslims" threatening possible 'uprisings' and 'holy wars'. The ignoring of such important diplomatic source material by a diplomatic historian, combined with his strictly negative caricature of those behind it, represents not only a major omission, but reflects a clear bias which manifests itself in other areas of his study as well (see below). The closest Sergeev comes to any of this is fleeting reference to the fact that 'it was the national liberation movement that molded a certain basis for Russo-British collaboration in 1907' (p. 327). Symptomatically, he offers no coverage of what the Kazakh sources explain, telling how:

On November 19, 1905 a convocation was organized by "The Union for Autonomy" in which 83 representatives participated from Azerbaijani, Armenia, Georgia, Poland, Latvia, Ukraine, the Kazakhs, the Tatars and others from among the ethnationally oppressed nations. In the

gathering, ... the resolution was put forth that ... every ethnonational people should receive autonomy in which they run their own affairs.[\(21\)](#)

In like manner, he omits entirely any discussion, let alone even mention, of the Indian National Congress and its essential predecessors.[\(22\)](#) In relation to both the Turkic Russian and Indian contexts, Sergeev could have made at least passing reference to one of the leading Jadid voices, Ismail bey Gaspirali (1851–1914) as well as the anti-British Indian Muslim reformer Abdul Hafiz Muhammad Barakatullah (1859–1927) who traveled internationally opposing Western imperialism while agitating for Indian independence from British rule.

Yet another essential strand of this same story, harkening back to Abdurreshid Ibrahim but appearing nowhere in the pages of Sergeev, is the developing relationship between Japan and the Ottoman Empire which emerged as early as 1870. Following from this, Genichiro Fukuchi, who had served as interpreter in the Iwakura Mission (1871–3), visited Istanbul in 1873, leading eventually to the official commencement of Japanese-Ottoman diplomatic relations in 1875. Numerous political, military, economic, and even religious exchanges took place, some no doubt involving discussions of their common enemy Russia.[\(23\)](#) Indeed, Colonel Yasumasa Fukushima, serving as an intelligence agent, conducted several intelligence gathering missions amidst these developing relations: the first in 1889–90 traveling between Tokyo, Istanbul and Berlin, a second trip in 1892 between Tokyo and Berlin via Russian Siberia, and a third from October 1895 to March 1897 traveling between Tokyo and Istanbul via Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Iraq.[\(24\)](#) All this lies behind Sergeev's passing mention of 'a projected tripartite Anglo-Japanese-Turkish coalition' (pp. 300–1).

Additional details integral to the Great Game could, likewise, have enriched Sergeev's otherwise limited references to the South African Boer War (1899–1902). While he notes its distant connection to Great Game developments (pp. 232, 234, 236, 245–6, 256–7), he omits from his sources not only the single, most important work on the subject – Davidson and Filatova, *The Russians and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902* – but a great many relevant details drawn therefrom. For example, Yevgeny Maximov, once a lieutenant colonel in the Russian army, was apparently sent on 'a secret mission in South Africa on behalf of the Russian War Ministry'. The combined results of Maximov's and other Russian (as well as Boer?) contributions yielded a total of 3561 pages of reports published in 21 volumes. One wonders why Sergeev, so focused on Russian diplomatic sources, makes no substantive use or mention of these important archival records? There was also an embassy of Boer ministers sent to Saint Petersburg in 1900 along with 'an enormous volume' of works published in Russian, including translations of Boer literature as well as Russian popular fiction whose setting was the Boer War. Indeed, 'Boer mania reached fever pitch' in Russia in those years. Later, seeking to return the favor, Boers supported Russia against Japan in the Russo-Japanese War. Overall, Davidson and Filatova's book '"demonstrates the significance of the South African War in Russia's international and internal policy"'. And while Sergeev denies historical connections between the Great Game and the later Cold War (pp. 2, 12), these Great Game relations between Russia and South Africa laid the ground work for later Soviet-South African cooperation in the Cold War.[\(25\)](#)

Great Game Historiography:

Chronological, Geographical and Geopolitical Considerations

As to the question of a clear, decisive start to the Great Game in 1856, Sergeev's entire first chapter reads more like the actual 'beginnings' rather than simply 'The prologue of the Great Game'. There (and into the second chapter) we read, for instance, that '[a]s early as 1800, a British commentator argued that "unless the progress of Russia was stopped, Persia, Turkey and India would become preys of her devouring ambition' (p. 54). There is, likewise, strategic vying for power and position between Britain and Russia in relation to the treaties of Gulistan (1813), Tehran (1814), and Turkmanchai (1829) (p. 51), as well as 'the Russo-Turkish War and Russo-Persian War of 1827–28 and 1828–29' and 'the Anglo-Afghan War of 1839–42' (p. 50); thus, in 1829 a British officer published *On the Practicability of an Invasion of British India* [\(26\)](#), with

further explicit British concern expressed in 1836 over 'Russia's strategic projects' in the region via John McNeill's *The Progress and Present Position of Russia in the East* (p. 53) (27); then 'Britain outwitted Russia in a preventative mission' in Central Asia in 1837 (p. 55), while in 1838 another work was published on *India, Great Britain, and Russia* in which '[t]he author stigmatized "an unprecedented Russian aggression in all directions"' (p. 70); indeed, the Russian assault on Herat in 1838 struck uncomfortably close to British India, with the British sending a force to the Persian Gulf in response (28); against the backdrop of these developments come two explicit declarations by Arthur Conolly in 1840 regarding 'the great game that is before us' from which the term 'Great Game' is technically drawn (pp. 1, 3); these are followed by the 1843 proposition that the Central Asian khanates be preserved 'as a neutral zone interposed between the empires' (p. 57); also, while the evidence in my view supports an even earlier start, Sergeev's own suggestion that 'Tsarist strategists ... had ignored the Indian direction until the outbreak of the Crimean War' would place the start at 1853 (cf. 'outbreak'), not 1856 (p. 70), with the schemes of a Russian attack upon India being presented to Tsar Nicholas I in 1854, two years prior to the alleged start (p. 71).

Behind much of this we have not only British expansion into northwestern India occurring in the 1840s, but Russian expansion southward into Central Asia. Central Asia as a strategic base for gaining access 'to the fabulous wealth of India' and other Asian regions southward had been on the radar of Russia since Peter the Great had set sights upon it as the 'key and gate' for fulfilling those aims. Following from this, he sent three reconnaissance missions (1715–20) to spy out the region, establishing also three military outposts along the northern borders of the Kazakh steppe.(29) Afterwards the three Kazakh khanates signed protectorate treaties with Russia (in 1731, 1740, 1742) based on mutual concerns over Jungar raids into Kazakh territories. After the Qing slaughter of the Jungars (1758) produced a period of relative tranquility, an official pronouncement of the annexation of Kazakh lands came in 1822 followed by the subsequent advance of the military to Novo-Alexandrovsk in the western steppe in 1834, the attempted but failed Russian assault on Khiva in 1839 (cf. p. 55), the establishment of Ayaguz (Sergiopol) in 1841 and Kopal in 1847, just above and below the eastern tip of Lake Balkhash respectively, as well as Turgai and Irgiz in 1845 and Aralsk in 1848, together with the abolishment of the khanate of 'Great Zhuz' of the Kazakhs in Zhetisu (aka Semirich'e) accompanied by the establishment of Verny (present-day Almaty) in 1854.(30) Though not detailed by him, particularly not in clear chronological terms (31), all this is behind Sergeev's passing citation of the official Russian declaration to Tsar Alexander II that "'by 1854, we have reached the lake of Issyk Kul and the River Chu from West Siberia; we have erected, likewise, strongholds in the lower flow of the Syr Daria.'" (p. 99).

Thus the Russian advance into Central Asia was already under way well before the Crimean War was even on the horizon. It was not commenced following the war, simply resumed. The same can be said for Russia's war plans against British India (cf. pp. 13, 68). The Crimean War simply interrupted the Central Asian advance on the one hand, and stoked the fires of fury and determination to attack British India all the more brightly on the other. It resulted in a definite intensification, but not the commencement of Great Game activities.

'Orientalist' Frames of Study? Russo-British Relations, 'the Great Powers', and 'Decadent Oriental States'

One final question here, indeed the most serious and involved, is that of using Russo-British relations to frame the study. Certainly Britain and Russia were two of the 'great powers' of the day – along with France, Germany, and the United States.(32) The main concern here is that 'great' implies 'not-so-great', that is, 'less than' those who are 'great'. And how 'great' versus 'less' of a role do we assign the multiple 'powers' involved in the various struggles going on across Asia? As explicitly stated by Sergeev regarding his book: 'Its purpose is to shatter myths and correct evident inaccuracies in our understanding of how preindustrial states and peoples were incorporated into modern civilization owing to the great powers' competition for supremacy in Asia' (p. 3). By this he means it was the 'great powers' of industrialized (or industrializing) Europe, primarily Russia and Britain, who were 'incorporating decadent Oriental states into the global system of relations' (p. 63; cf. p. 347). In his view, this was inevitable, for 'the traditional despotic regimes in Central and East Asia ... had been lagging far behind the European countries throughout the period in

question, and thus they were doomed to be subjugated by the more dynamic non-Asian powers' (pp. 14–15). Indeed: 'Above all ... the modernization of backward, traditional, preindustrial societies underlay the Game's agenda' (p. 346). All these ideas are poignantly summed up in his conclusion:

At the beginning of the Great Game, Central and East Asia were characterized by more or less medieval political, social, economic, and cultural features. Then the competition between British and Russian civilizing patterns led to modern changes in all spheres of daily routine. Instead of the social apathy, economic backwardness, and political anarchy in which they had been stuck for centuries, local nations gradually began to awake under the influence of innovations that were brought to them by the Great Game's "players" of different caliber (pp. 329–30).

We, likewise, encounter 'decadent and cruel Oriental potentates' (p. 309), who, borrowing from *The Times* in London, are "'semi-barbarous states, ever at feud with one another'" (p. 97). These are the Central Asian states of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand as depicted by Sergeev. In similar fashion, we have 'predatory tribes' (p. 80), '[n]umerous gangs of mounted bandits' (pp. 56–7), and 'savage nomads' (p. 145) creating 'turmoil' (pp. 117–18), or, in the words of the Russian war minister, Miliutin, "'[t]he ultimate chaos that is reigning now'" (p. 134). Both together are portrayed as locked in 'permanent internecine feuds among local rulers and warlords' (p. 80; cf. p. 191). Such is how the 'Oriental' (aka 'Asian') peoples are integrated into his narrative.

What this means for the Russian advance into Central Asia is summed up most effectively in one particular passage:

'Nevertheless, in 1716, the Russians embarked on the construction of the so-called Orenburg-Siberian defensive line...protecting the southern frontier of the Russian Empire. ...However, nomadic tribes regularly raided the frontier area during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries—as, for example, they did under the command of the self-proclaimed Kazakh "sultan" Kenessary Kasimov in 1841-47. Numerous gangs of mounted bandits frequently broke through defensive lines of cordon posts, looted Russian colonists, captured many people, and sold them as white slaves on the markets of Khiva and Bokhara, while frontier guards were enlisted mostly to garrison service. The ignorance of local specialities, inadequate mobility, and a scarcity of the means of offensive prevented frontier guards from conducting effective punitive expeditions on a regular basis ... to eliminate banditry and slavery in Central Asia (pp. 56–57; cf. p. 144, 159, 221).

Note carefully here how Sergeev portrays the Russian side as an orderly, civilized, 'tolerant' people simply defending and 'protecting ... the Russian Empire' while being 'prevented ... from conducting effective punitive expeditions' against "'[t]hese darkest of all the dark places of the Earth [which] were full of the habitations of cruelty'". The latter phrase forms part of a citation which Sergeev, apparently with affirmation, quotes from 'the renowned British scholar Charles Trevelyan ... in *The Times*, referring to the Russian conquest of Turmkenia' as part of his conclusion (pp. 332–3).

That Sergeev generally shares this opinion is reflected in his derogatory representation of Kenessary Kasimov as nothing but a 'self-proclaimed "sultan"' who heads up nothing more than one of the '[n]umerous gangs of mounted bandits' who 'raided the frontier area'. To the contrary, Kenessary was the grandson of the great Kazakh khan Ablai (1711–81) and, therefore, rightful heir to the Kazakh khanship. He was clearly affirmed and embraced by a large portion of the Kazakh population as the last khan to rule the Kazakh khanate before a Russian provincial governing system was instituted on the Kazakh Steppe.⁽³³⁾ The Kazakh historian Zh. Kasimbaev, in his article on 'The ethnonational independence movement of the Kazakh people led by Kenesari Kasimuhli', makes clear that Kenessary, when conducting his campaign,

set before himself the [clear] intention of restoring the territorial solidarity and independence...of the Kazakh nation. Before commencing any armed revolt he sent letters on numerous occasions to the rulers of the Russian empire setting forth the required demands.⁽³⁴⁾

This disregard by a diplomatic historian of both the diplomatic correspondence and the proper honored diplomatic status of an Asian national leader which forms an integral part of the history he is treating harkens back to his manner of handling the Jadid Muslim reformers. It once again exposes not only Sergeev's demeaning attitude toward these peoples, but his misrepresentation of them. This is not surprising, however, for someone drawing so heavily on Soviet scholarship, for all such interpretations of Kenessary as 'a national hero fighting for independence' leading 'a national liberation movement and not a counterrevolutionary one' were condemned by Soviet historiography. This is evidenced most vividly in the sentencing of the noted Kazakh historian Yermukhan Bekmakhanov in 1952 to 25 years in prison for attempting precisely such an interpretation in his 1948 work on *Kazakhstan in the 1820s and 1840s*. 'The Soviet regime viewed his historical analysis as threatening'.⁽³⁵⁾

Preceding Kenessary were a host of earlier uprisings against Russian rule, including not only the Pugachev Revolt (1773–5) in which thousands of Kazakhs participated, but the Kazakh uprising led by Batir Srim Datov (1783–97), the joint struggles led by Zholaman Tlenshiev (1820–35) and Sarzhan Kasimuhli (1824–36), and the mutually cooperative movements of Isatai Taimanov and Mahambet Utemisov (1836–1840).⁽³⁶⁾ In Sergeev's view though, it was 'Russian tolerance for local traditions' which 'revived the aspirations of dissidents to stir up anti-Russian uprisings', with his only example being the Andijan uprising of 1897–8 (pp. 332–3). But rather than offer serious attention to genuine opposition against the Russian advance, Sergeev instead highlights those Central Asians who 'often acted as pathfinders', 'voluntarily allied with Russian armies', 'welcomed' the invading conquerors, 'bec[a]me Russian subjects by their own will', and 'agreed that the incorporation of the Central Asian peoples into the Russian Empire was more progressive than' the other available options (pp. 58, 111, 332). Taking this angle of approach of course lends support to his contention that 'Russian rule was definitely more understandable for natives who were not really ready to fully accept Western civilization' (p. 332).

Still more, Sergeev's choice to use the adjective 'punitive' (in the text cited above) carries a clear, intended sense of 'just, deserved punishment' for aggressive violations against the innocent, assaulted Russian victims.⁽³⁷⁾ Meanwhile, the Kazakh scholar Akseleu Seidimbek insists, from the perspective of the colonized, that for his people it accomplished not justice, but instead only 'cast the hell of colonization into their consciousness'.⁽³⁸⁾ Another Kazakh scholar, Abdizhapar Abdakimuhli, agrees, calling it nothing but 'oppressive over-lordship'.⁽³⁹⁾

Indeed, Sergeev confesses in fair and frank manner that the Russian assaults on Central Asia were at times 'accompanied by the massacre of not merely armed defenders but also noncombatant townsfolk, including elderly people, women, and children', and in the case of the Youmud Turkmen, their 'wholesale slaughter'.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Certain 'eyewitnesses of these hostilities', including '[e]ven Russian observers ... disclosed these vicious practices', reporting in newspapers and journals 'on the dreadful scenes of atrocities committed by Tsarist troops' (pp. 109, 190; cf. also p. 198). He, likewise, on occasion describes these Russian attacks as

having been carried out on 'a pretext' (pp. 114–15, 190). But not just on these occasions; rather, in the words of General Kaufmann to the Russian foreign minister Miliutin: "'Until the present time, we have failed to undertake any action in a noncombatant manner; each new step in our diplomacy, each success in trade, has been achieved with blood'" (pp. 124–5).⁽⁴¹⁾ One may justifiably ask, then, who the true 'semi-barbarous savages' producing the 'ultimate chaos' were? Of course, 'the Foreign Office vehemently protested against the acts of violence committed by Tsarist expeditionary forces in South Trans-Caspia', but this was 'especially in view of the Russo-British negotiations on the Afghan boundary's delimitation, which were in full swing' (p. 206), not on any moral-ethical basis. In like manner, 'open criticism was given by a minor group of Russian political observers', but this did not concern the Russian propagandistic misrepresentation of the 'oriental' peoples nor their subjugation, it was rather 'with regard to the pattern of military rule in Turkestan' which took shape following the conquests (p. 115–16).

The entire caricature here, then, of 'dynamic, progressive, orderly, and civilized' Europeans acting upon "static, backward, apathetic, anarchic, and chaotic" Asians harkens uncomfortably back to earlier 19th- and 20th-century white European racist views as reflected, for example, in British attitudes toward Indians which held that they were "'grossly ignorant, steeped in idolatrous superstition, unenergetic, fatalistic'" and, thus, in need of "'the essential parts of European civilization'".⁽⁴²⁾ More to the point, Sergeev continues a Russian imperial tradition dating back to at least the eighteenth century of depicting 'the neighboring nomadic peoples ... as "wild, untamed horses", "wild animals", "wild, unruly, and disloyal peoples", whose khans practiced "savage customs"', while '[b]y contrast, the Russian Empire was proudly portrayed by government officials as "the world's respected and glorious state"'.⁽⁴³⁾ Going back still further, Abdakimuhli notes that:

a good number of present-day historians are still unable to rid themselves of the falsely convincing opinions which have been soaked into their heads through the writings of the middle centuries, particularly the chronicles of Ancient Russia. According to them, nomads ... cannot even be placed on a level with human beings. They are even ascribed the position of being the offspring of demons and devils who suddenly came forth from hell on the day humanity came into being.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Granted, much like the Cherokee leader Elias Boudinout in the context of 'Indian Removal' in the U.S. in 1828 ⁽⁴⁵⁾, Shokan Ualihanuhli (aka Chokan Valikhanov), a Kazakh serving in the Tsarist military in the 1850–1860s, called his own people 'a wild and barbarous race, demoralized by Islamism, and reduced almost to idiocy by [the] political and religious despotism of their native rulers' (pp. 32–3). But Sergeev omits the fact that near the end of his life Ualihanuhli 'grew disillusioned with the methods that the Russian administration used in establishing its authority in Turkestan and resigned from state service'.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Regardless, Eurocentric 'orientalist' approaches did not end with the fall of the Tsarist Empire, for Kazakh and other non-Slavic peoples were themselves forced, during the Soviet period, to confess something directly akin to such creeds as part of the national anthems imposed upon their republics, declaring in bold fashion: 'Protectors of the nations, we express much gratitude to the great Russian people'.⁽⁴⁷⁾

And so, Sergeev still carries on not only a long-standing Tsarist tradition, but the post-Stalinist approach of the 1950s and 1960s which he himself highlights when 'the champions of the so-called concept of the lesser evil advocated the Russian penetration of Central Asia as a progressive development aimed at the reformation of preindustrial societies' (p. 11). His direct descent from this line of scholarship is only reinforced by the continuation of the same quote which clarifies that

all Soviet scholars shared the opinion that Britain had always been an aggressive imperialistic power in the Orient and that British colonial rule should be considered far crueler and less acceptable to indigenous ethnicities than that inaugurated by Tsarist civil and military

authorities (p. 11).

And so, Sergeev, following in the footsteps of Soviet scholarship, highlights that:

Symptomatically, many Europeans were convinced that [the] Russian ... pattern of colonial government proved to be not less progressive and sometimes more efficient than that of the British. ... It is disputable whether Russian rule was less progressive than British rule in the fields of education, industry, and social standards, but Russian rule was definitely more understandable for natives who were not really ready to fully accept Western civilization ... whereas the British caused the local people to feel inferior, the Russians wished them to behave somewhat as if they were at home ... Durand quite correctly held that whereas the Russian position in Asia was natural, the British one proved to be artificial' (pp. 332–3; cf. pp. 149, 156).

Thus indeed, 'a good deal' of the 'contemporary patterns of Orientology and historiography in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia ... is still following the paradigms set in the Soviet period' (48), with those paradigms reaching even further back deep into the Tsarist period. This is also confirmed by Anara Tabyshalieva, a Kyrgyz scholar offering critical comments on this review essay before its publication, saying:

I fully agree with your critique of the Eurocentric approach of E. Sergeev. His statements remind me of some pre-Soviet and Soviet publications. ... Seems to me, the author disregarded post-Soviet publications of Central Asian historians.(49)

As for a Kazakh perspective, Kereiham Amanzholov insists, contra Sergeev, that Russian colonization offered 'no essential difference with the colonialist policies of Britain, France, and other European powers' since all of them were 'Eurocentric' and exploitative.(50)

Apparently, though, from Sergeev's perspective, he is more concerned to correct 'a distorted image of Russia in the West' (p. 2) than a distorted image of Asia in both Russia and the West. We certainly welcome the former. But, alas, Sergeev leaves us still awaiting the day when 'the great powers' offer greater recognition and respect to the 'non-Western' peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, portraying them in a more respectful manner while also acknowledging their genuine 'dynamic, progressive, civilizational' achievements and contributions to world history. Only then will they be given their rightful place within the storyline, as opposed to justifying their paternalistic subjugation by virtue of their alleged "backward, despotic" ways. It is one thing to simply portray the 19th-century Russian views as they were expressed. But this does not keep the historian from critically analyzing those views in relation to and in light of the modern setting in which they are investigated, especially when framing introductions and drawing conclusions. Thus, while Sergeev recognizes that the former Tsarist Russian attitudes were 'orientalist' in the truest sense of Edward Said's intended critical meaning (pp. 5, 31–4), he himself does little to correct them, but rather reinforces and more deeply entrenches them.

Whatever other strengths or weaknesses the work may have, Sergeev's effort remains an impressive undertaking and no belittling of that accomplishment is intended in this critique. His clear strength is Russian and British diplomatic history within the broader context of 'great power' relations. To this he makes an important contribution, one from which the reader will richly benefit, just as this reviewer has, provided that the book is read with a critical eye.

Endnotes (drawn only from sources not included in Sergeev's study):

*Special thanks to Dr. Anara Tabyshalieva (co-editor with M. Palat of *History of the Civilizations of Central Asia: Volume 6: towards the contemporary period: From the mid-nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century*, UNESCO, 2005) for offering critical comments on this review before its publication. Responsibility for all content remains my own.

Notes

1. The author does not provide an explicit description of the late 1850s and 1860s as one of re-emerging tensions. It is supplied from my own reading of the narrative.[Back to \(1\)](#)
2. See e.g. Oktay Kizilkaya, "[XIX. Yüzyılın Sonu XX. Yüzyılın Başlarında Basra Körfezi'nde Uluslararası Hâkimiyet Mücadelesi](#)" [2] ["International Struggle of Sovereignty in Persian Gulf at the End of the Nineteenth Century and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century"], *Turkish Studies*, Vol 8, No 7 (Summer 2013), 293-306; [Melike Sarıoğlu](#) [3], "'İran'da Nasereddin Şah ve Muzaffereddin Şah Dönemi'nde (1848-1907) İngiltere Rusya ve Fransa'ya Verilen Hukukî İmtiyazlar'" ["Iranian Concessions Granted to England, Russia and France During the Rules of Nasereddin Shah and Muzaffereddin Shah (1848-1907)"], *History Studies: International Journal of History*, Vol 5, No 2, (March 2013), 397-410; see additional Turkish works in notes below.[Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Two important primary sources in Kazakh are "Turkistan ualayating gazetı" ["News Source of the Turkistan Region," 1870-1882] and "Dala ualayating gazetı" ["News Source of the Steppe Region," 1888-1902], both Tsarist news publications aimed at government control of information in the respective regions; selections from the former were published under that title by Almaty, KZ: Gilim, 2003. Included are numerous news briefs relevant to the Great Game, e.g., "Concerning the Dungs who have migrated here from Kashgar" (Apr 30, 1881, No 8), "After the Returning of Kulzha to the Chinese Empire..." (Sep 30, 1881, No 18); "[News] From the Lands...of the Turkmen People in the Region of Merv" (Nov 30, 1881, No 22); "Concerning the Purchase of Tea Coming from England and India" (Jan 30, 1882, No 2 and May 25, 1882, No 9). All titles are, of course, originally in Kazakh-Turkic.[Back to \(3\)](#)
4. Scott C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and Its Trade, 1550-1900* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 266.[Back to \(4\)](#)
5. Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), citing Salar Jang, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, pp. 15-17.[Back to \(5\)](#)
6. Ibid, pp. 17-21.[Back to \(6\)](#)
7. See: Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Made Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012); and R. Charles Weller, "Arab Nationalism before 1914," in *World History Encyclopedia*, ed. by Alfred J. Andrea (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Greenwood, 2011).[Back to \(7\)](#)
8. Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism*, p. 40.[Back to \(8\)](#)
9. Ibid, p. 67; cf. from pp. 64ff.[Back to \(9\)](#)
10. Ibid, p. 43.[Back to \(10\)](#)
11. Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Restructuring Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 274.[Back to \(11\)](#)
12. Serif Mardin, "Abdurreshid Ibrahim and Zeki Velidi Togan in the History of Muslims of Russia," in *Rethinking Central Asia: non-Eurocentric studies in history, social structure and identity*, ed. by Korkut A. Ertuk (Ithaca Press, 1999), pp. 111-128. Note the Cyrillic spelling of his name is ????????? (Abdurashid Ibragim).[Back to \(12\)](#)
13. Cf. James H. Meyer, "Im Migration, Return, and the Politics of Citizenship: Russian Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, 1860-1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Feb 2007), 15-32; cf. also Brian Glyn Williams, "Hijra and forced migration from nineteenth-century Russia to the Ottoman Empire." *Cahiers Du Monde Russe*, 2000, Vol.41(1), pp.79-108.[Back to \(13\)](#)
14. See: Larisa Usmanova, *The Türk-Tatar Diaspora in Northeast Asia: transformation of consciousness: a historical and sociological account between 1898 and the 1950s* (Tokyo: Rakudasha, 2007); Ismail

Turkoglu, *Sibiryal Meshur Seyyah Abdurresid Ibrahim* [*The Famous Siberian Pilgrim Abdurresid Ibrahim*] (Turkiye Diyanet Vakf Yaynlar, 1997); Matsunaga Akira, ?????? [Tatars in Japan] (Toyo Shobo, 2009); Misawa Nobuo, ed., *Tatar Exiles in Japan: Koji Okubo as the mediator* (Tokyo: Asian Cultures Research Institute, Toyo University, 2012); Selcuk Esenbel, *Japan, Turkey, and the World of Islam: the writings of Selcuk Esenbel* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2011); Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: visions of world order in pan-Islamic and pan-Asian thought* (Columbia University Press, 2007). Renee Worringer, ed., *The Islamic Middle East and Japan: perceptions, aspirations, and the birth of intra-Asian modernity* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 2007). [Back to \(14\)](#)

15. See esp. Dilyara M. Usmanova, "The Activity of the Muslim Faction of the State Duma and its Significance in the Formation of a Political Culture among the Muslim Peoples of Russia (1906-1917)," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries: Vol. 2: inter-regional and inter-ethnic relations*, ed. by Von Kugelgen, Anke, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), pp. 417-56. [Back to \(15\)](#)
16. See esp. Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). [Back to \(16\)](#)
17. Along with works cited above, see also: A. Ahat Andican, *Turkestan Struggle Abroad: from Jadidism to independence* (Haarlem, Netherlands: SOTA, 2007) and Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 1999). [Back to \(17\)](#)
18. Pp. 110, 117, 124, 177, 204; cf. also 83, 135, 142, 197, 208. On the realities of these threats, see: Uwe Halbach, "'Holy War' against Czarism: The Links between Sufism and Jihad in the Nineteenth-Century Anticolonial Resistance against Russia," in *Muslim Communities Emerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*, ed. (German edition) by Andreas Kappeler, Gerhard Simon, and Georg Bunner, and (English edition) by Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 251-276. [Back to \(18\)](#)
19. Usmanova, "The Activity of the Muslim Faction of the State Duma," pp. 439-40. [Back to \(19\)](#)
20. Ibid, pp. 434-5. [Back to \(20\)](#)
21. Sabit Shildebai, *Turkshildik zhanye Kazakhstandagi ult-azattik kozgalis* [*Turkic Nationalism and the National Independence Movement in Kazakhstan*] (Almaty: Gilim, 2002). Cf. also "The Zadar Resolution, October 17, 1905" concerning Serbian, Croatian, and Hungarian independence and the Lithuanian 'Conference of Vilnius' on Dec 4-5, 1905. [Back to \(21\)](#)
22. See Richard Sisson, *Congress and Indian Nationalism: the pre-independence phase* (University of California Press, 1988); Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: competition and collaboration in the later nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1971); cf. Noor-Aiman I. Khan, *Egyptian-Indian Nationalist Collaboration and the British Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). [Back to \(22\)](#)
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25. All the material here, including quotes, drawn from Kobus du Pisani, Review of *The Russian and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, by Apollon Davidson, Irina Filatova (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1998). Published on H-Africa (March, 1999). Available at: www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2919 [6] (Last accessed March 8, 2014). [Back to \(25\)](#)

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27. Cf. *ibid*, p. 10.[Back to \(27\)](#)
28. *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.[Back to \(28\)](#)
29. Cf. Sergeev, pp. 56-57; also Levi, *Indian Diaspora*, p. 259.[Back to \(29\)](#)
30. See: "Map 1: The Russian Advances in Central Asia," in Ewan, *Securing the Indian Frontier in Central Asia*, pp. 14-15; Gulnar Kendirbai, *Land and People: the Russian colonization of the Kazak Steppe* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2002); K. Amanzholov, "Oris patshaligining Kazak zherlerin otarlap aluina kiskasha tarihi" ["A Brief History of Russia's Conquest of Kazakh Lands"], in *Turki haliktarining tarihi [The History of the Turkic Peoples]*, Vol. 3 (Almaty, KZ: Bilim, 1999), pp. 5-14; I. Yerofeeva, "Kazakhstan Under the Power of the Russian Empire," in *History of Kazakhstan: Essays*, ed. by Manash Kozibaev (Almaty: Gilim, 1998), pp. 81-92; Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); and George J. Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan, 1896-1916* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969).[Back to \(30\)](#)
31. This is indicated by the lack of order in which the page numbers come, and sometimes large gap between those references, in relation to the chronology of events I have drawn from his work in the previous paragraph: 54, 51, 50, 53, 55, 70, 1 & 3, 57, 70, 71.[Back to \(31\)](#)
32. Cf. In Sergeev's coverage of Fromkin's 1980 study which noted that in 'wider readings' of the Great Game's importance, scholars 'have tended to see the Game through the prism of the general Russo-British imperial context' (p. 9).[Back to \(32\)](#)
33. See Zh. Kasimbaev, "Kenesari Kasimuhli bastagan Kazakh xalkining ult-azattik kozgalisi," in *Kazakhstan ulttik [national] encyclopediasi*, ed. by Abdimalik Nisanbaev, Vol. 4 (Zh-K), (Almaty, KZ: "Kazakh Encyclopediasi," 2002), p. 502; Kereiham Amanzholov, *Turki haliktarining tarihi*, Vol. 3, p. 102; E. Valikhanov, "National Liberation Struggles of the Kazak People Against Russian Colonialism," in *History of Kazakhstan*, ed. by Kozibaev, p. 102; T. Turligulov, *Kazakh elining kiskasha tarihi [A Brief History of the Kazakh Nation]* (Almaty: Rauan, 1998), p. 103.[Back to \(33\)](#)
34. Zh. Kasimbaev, "Kenesari Kasimuhli bastagan Kazakh xalkining ult-azattik kozgalisi," p. 502. Concerning his diplomatic correspondence with Tsarist officials, cf. Martha B. Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), p. 66.[Back to \(34\)](#)
35. Bekmakhanov, Yermukhan (1915– 1966)," in *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan*, ed. by Ustina Markus, Didar Kassymova, and Zhanat Kundakbayeva (Scarecrow Press, 2012), pp. 49-50.[Back to \(35\)](#)
36. Valikhanov, "The National Liberation Struggles of the Kazak People Against Russian Colonialism," pp. 104-13; see also "History: The Struggle of the Kazakh People on the Road to Independence and Political Self-Government," in *Kazakhstan Respublikasi Encyclopedialik Aniktama [The Republic of Kazakhstan: An Encyclopedic Reference Book]*, ed. by A. Nisanbaev (Almaty, KZ: 'Kazakh Encyclopediasi', 2001), p. 81, and A. Abdakimuhli, "Kazakhstandagi ult-azattik kozgalistar" ["Ethnonational independence movements in Kazakhstan"], in *Kazakhstan tarihi: erteden buginge deiin [The History of Kazakhstan: from early times to the present]* (Almaty: Respublikalik baspa kabineti, 1997), pp. 123-134.[Back to \(36\)](#)
37. Cf. the 1789 law of 'The Freeman of the State of Georgia' regarding Native American Cherokees, which granted the white Euro-American colonists (now claiming themselves "citizens" of "their" new nation) to 'put to death or capture the said Indians' for 'committing hostilities against the people of this state' (cited in Jake Page, *In the Hands of the Great Spirit: The 20,000-Year History of American Indians*, Free Press, 2003, pp. 254-55).[Back to \(37\)](#)
38. A. Seidimbek, *Kazakh alemi: etnomadeni paiimdau [The Kazakh World: an ethnocultural exegesis]* (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 1997), pp. 105-6.[Back to \(38\)](#)
39. A. Abdakimuhli, *Kazakhstan tarihi: erteden buginge deiin [The History of Kazakhstan: from early times to the present]* (Almaty: Respublikalik baspa kabineti, 1997), p. 113.[Back to \(39\)](#)
40. Cf. Mehmet Saray, *The Turkmen in the Age of Imperialism: a study of the Turkmen people and their incorporation into the Russian Empire* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 1989).[Back to \(40\)](#)

41. Cf. the Kazakh scholar Murtaza Bulutai, *Musilman Kazak Elimiz* [*Our Muslim Kazak Nation*] (Almaty, KZ: Aris, 2001), who speaks of 'the club of the Soviet Empire dripping with blood' (p. 14). [Back to \(41\)](#)
42. J.M. Roberts, *History of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 651. [Back to \(42\)](#)
43. M. Khodarkovsky, "'Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects': Constructing Non-Christian Identity in Early Modern Russia," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, ed. by Brower and Lazzerrini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 9-26; see also S. Layton, "Nineteenth-Century Russian Mythologies of Caucasian Savagery," A.L. Jersild, "From Savagery to Citizenship: Caucasian Mountaineers and Muslims in the Russian Empire" and B. Grant, "Empire and Savagery: The Politics of Primitivism in Late Imperial Russia," in the same volume, pp. 80-100, 101-114 and 292-310 respectively. Cf. also Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*. [Back to \(43\)](#)
44. Abdakimuhli, *Kazakistan tarihi*, p. 94. [Back to \(44\)](#)
45. The Cherokees have been reclaimed from their wild habits. Instead of hunters, they have become the cultivators of the soil. Instead of wild and ferocious savages thirsting for blood, they have become the mild citizens, the friends and brothers of the white man. Instead of the superstitious heathens, many of them have become the worshipers of the true God' (Elias Boudinout, *Cherokee Phoenix* newspaper, 1828, as cited in *Trail of Tears – A Native American Documentary Collection*, Mill Creek Entertainment, 2010). [Back to \(45\)](#)
46. Valikhanov, Chokan Shinghisuly (1835– 1865),” in in *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan*, ed. by Markus, Kassymova, and Kundakbayeva, p. 279. [Back to \(46\)](#)
47. Quoted from the National Anthem of the Kazakh SSR. [Back to \(47\)](#)
48. Michael Kemper, “Introduction: Integrating Soviet Oriental Studies,” in *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. by M. Kemper and Stephan Conermann (Routledge, 2010), p. 2. [Back to \(48\)](#)
49. A. Tabysheva, personal correspondence, March 14, 2014. [Back to \(49\)](#)
50. Amanzholov, “Oris patshaligining Kazak zherlerin otarlap aluina kiskasha tarihi,” pp. 13-14. [Back to \(50\)](#)

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