

## **Russian-English rivalry and the Pamir question in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the second half of the 19th century.**

*Iskandarov Shodiyor Nurdullo o'gli*

*2nd year doctoral student at the Department of World History, Faculty of History, Sharof Rashidov Samarkand State University.*

[shodiyoriskandarov93@gmail.com](mailto:shodiyoriskandarov93@gmail.com)

941878055

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article scientifically reveals the geopolitical position of Central Asia and Afghanistan in the second half of the 19th century, the rivalry of the two powerful states in these regions and the serious consequences of this rivalry, the geopolitical goals of the competing states, the annexation of the Central Asian khanates by Tsarist Russia and Afghanistan by England, as well as the attempts to reach an agreement between the two states on the issue of the "roof of the world" (Pamir territory) and the fate of the people who, on this basis, actually became part of a state to which they did not belong.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The British policy towards Central Asia and Afghanistan and the defeat of Tsarist Russia in the Crimean War accelerated Russian aggression against the Central Asian khanates. [1. 610-611] After a long and difficult resistance in the 1860s-1880s, the Central Asian khanates were defeated. In 1868, the Emir of Bukhara became a vassal of the Russian emperor, and the Russian Empire gained a strong position on the right bank of the Jaihun (Amu Darya). After Bukhara, Khiva was conquered in 1873, and in 1876 the Kokand Khanate was abolished, and in its place the Fergana region of the Turkestan Governorate-General was formed and annexed to Russia. [2.182-310]

The people of Central Asia, which had raised great people in their bosom, were forced to endure the oppression of the Russians. Terrible battles were fought for each territory. By the mid-1870s, the territories up to the Amu Darya were occupied by the invaders. The tsarist government achieved successes in the region. But the British also did not give up hope for this territory and were looking for a way to include it in their sphere of influence. This is evidenced by the fact that in 1873, Colonel Baker, Captain Clayton and Lieutenant Gill, under the pretext of engaging in a "scientific study of the Atrek River basin", collected political and strategic information on Central Asia for a long time and submitted it to the British

government. [2. 332] As a result of this expedition, various military-political and topographical materials on Khorasan and Turkmenistan were collected, and Baker published an article entitled "Military Geography of Central Asia" in the Journal of the Society of Military Scientific Officers in London. It described the routes between Herat and the Caspian Sea and the possibilities of using them in the event of a war with Russia.[3]

After Baker, Robert William Napier, son of Field Marshal Robert Cornelius Napier of Magdala, commander-in-chief of the Anglo-Indian Army, set out for the borders of Turkmenistan in June 1874. Napier's main goal was to search for the connection area between Iran, Afghanistan and the Turkmen lands and the possibilities of using the Turkmen tribes in England's fight against Russia. According to the Russian representative in Tehran, Napier's trip was carried out by special order of the British government "to study the Persian border and achieve victory over the Turkmen, as well as to study the positions of the Russian troops in Atrek." [2.333]

In the second half of the 1870s, the British sent many scouts to the Turkmen lands. In particular, in 1875, Colonel C. Macgregor, in late 1876, Napier (for the second time), and in 1876, Captain Butler sent scouts. [1. 642-643] However, Tsarist Russia began the movement and in early May 1877, attacked the Akhal-Teke oasis (the area inhabited by Turkmen tribes) and captured Kyzylvot. [4. 170] The gradual transfer of the lands of the Akhal-Teke oasis to the Russian Empire caused concern and discontent among British expansionists.

On June 9, 1877, the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, A. M. Gorchakov, wrote in a note that the Russian military campaigns in Central Asia were infringing on the interests of the Afghan emir and that London was the protector of Afghanistan. [2. 340] A few years earlier, in 1873, a treaty had been signed between Tsarist Russia and England, according to which Russia was not to set its sights on the lands south of the Amu Darya, and the British were not to encroach on Central Asia. [5. 61] However, the information provided confirms that neither country adhered to this obligation. British preparations for the conquest of Afghanistan began when Benjamin Disraeli (1874-1880) came to power, and the rapid Russian advance southward led to an openly aggressive British policy toward Afghanistan. In the spring of 1878, the Tsarist government sent a diplomatic mission to Kabul under the leadership of General Stoletov, where it was received with great honor. The purpose of this mission was to assist the emir in the upcoming Anglo-Afghan war. However, Sherali Khan refused to accept the British embassy. [6.247] England used the fact that it accepted the Russian mission in Kabul and refused to accept the British mission as a convenient pretext to start the war. [7. 165]

The British plan was to advance rapidly towards Kabul, hoping to end the war by capturing the capital. By mid-January 1879, General Browne's troops had crossed the Khyber Pass and captured Jalalabad, marking the beginning of the Second Anglo-Afghan War. The war would last until the spring of 1880, and the Afghans would put up fierce resistance to repel the British advance. Although the war ended in Afghan victory, it did not reduce British influence in Afghanistan. On the contrary, an agreement was signed between the two sides, which stipulated that Abdur Rahman would be replaced by an Indian Muslim agent in Kabul to liaise with British officials in India. In addition, Afghanistan was deprived of the right to establish independent diplomatic relations with other countries (except British India), and it was strictly stipulated that foreign relations would be carried out through the British viceroy in India. [6. 264] The Second Anglo-Afghan War effectively led to the establishment of a British protectorate over this territory. A significant part of the British political elite considered the establishment of control over Afghanistan to be an important task for England. In this regard, G. Bellew, a participant in the Second Anglo-Afghan War, noted the following in 1880: "He (the Afghan) has his own advantages and disadvantages, and in our opinion the latter is much superior to the former. He cannot control himself or others and, unfortunately, needs a master. If we do not take on this role, Russia will take it." [8. 55]

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Russia had established a protectorate in Central Asia, and the British had

increased their influence in Afghanistan. The next major issue was the border problem, and the treaty concluded as a result of negotiations in 1872-1873 had lost its force. For Anglo-Russian relations were now strained over the Pamir issue. The Pamirs had a unique geopolitical position, being a mountainous region deeply encircled by the great Karakorum and Hindu Kush ranges that separated Russian Central Asia from British India. [5. 62] This region could have served as a natural barrier to prevent the Russians from advancing towards their Indian possessions, which was a strategic task for the British. The Pamirs were a mountainous region, and the eastern regions were under the Kokand Khanate and the western regions were under the Emirate of Bukhara. However, during the invasions of Tsarist Russia, they became practically independent.

To explore the area, the British sent a mission to Kashgar, led by Lord Mayo D. Forsyth, the Viceroy of India. The mission, led by Douglas Forsyth, consisted of 350 men and 550 animals and entered Kashgar in December 1873 with great pomp and ceremony and met with the ruler, Yakubbek. It was a reconnaissance mission to determine the reliability of the Pamir passes, which could protect India from the Russians. [5. 62]

The Russian scientific community also began to take a keen interest in the Pamirs. As a result, in July 1881, at the request of the Russian Geographical Society, a member of the society, a doctor from the Namangan district, A. Regel, organized an expedition to the Bukhara Khanate, and the following year, in 1882, to Shugnon and Badakhshan. [2. 375-376] This expedition served as a pretext for the Afghan invasion of the Western Pamir provinces. The British were the direct supporters of this military campaign. At this point, as the English general Percy Sykes noted: "For the benefit of the Indian Empire (i.e., the English colonialists), it was expedient not to leave a gap between the Chinese and Afghan possessions." [2. 375-376] Abdurakhman Khan himself describes the course of the work in his "Autobiography" as follows: "I sent an army against Yusuf Ali, the ruler of Shugnon and Rushan. He declared himself independent, but did not want to be satisfied with this, because he was afraid that in the future I would annex his possessions to myself. Taking this into account, he first negotiated with the Khan of Kokand, and then with the Russian government. He invited the Russian physician Regel to Shugnon and told him his complaints. "

Thus, in 1883, the Pamir principalities of Rushan, Shugnon, and Wakhan, with the support of the British, invaded Afghanistan. passed. The Russian government strongly protested, as this was considered a violation of the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1872. After lengthy diplomatic negotiations, military expeditions and clashes, on March 27, 1895, an agreement was signed between Russia and Great Britain in London "On the Delimitation of Spheres of Influence in the Pamir Region". According to it, the Pamirs on the right bank of the Amu Darya River went to Russia, and the Wakhan and Shugnon regions on the left bank went to Afghanistan. Central Asia was divided between the British and Russian empires. The borders were artificial, arbitrary, and ethnographic, cultural and economic aspects were completely ignored. The once self-sufficient cultural, historical and economic-geographical space was coldly divided between the empires. The tragic fate of the division befell Wakhan, Shugnan, Rushan, Darvaz, Balkh, Kunduz, Akhchu, Shibergon and other border regions.[5. 61-62] The territories of the left bank of the Amu Darya, stretching towards Bukhara and Turkestan, became part of the Afghan (i.e. Pashtun) possessions. As a result of such a division, the local population, who had been living in these territories for a long time, became part of another state, not of the state to which they belonged. However, this agreement brought the relations of the two great powers to a new level and led to some warming.

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