

## **Russian Historiography and Source Studies of the Problem of «Russian Threat» to India Within the Context of Anglo-Russian Relations**

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**Abstract:** Modern Russian historiographical and source base make it possible to present the nature, role and place of Anglo-Russian relations in Central Asian Region, understand the phenomenon of so called «Russian threat» to India in the latter half of 18 to early 20 centuries, developed in English historiography within the concept of the «Great Game» as a complex of interstate contradictions and rivalry, reveal policy motives and objectives of the Russian and British Empires in the region in the period under review.

**Key words:** Russian historiographical and source studies, anglo-russian relations, «russian threat» to India, «great game», place

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The last decade is characterized with the revival of theoretical and conceptual and concrete historical studies of international relations in Central Asia and the Middle East. Particularly, domestic researchers study history and historiography of relations between Russia and Britain in the region. First of all in this regard thesis research of Lurie (1996) and Dankov (2008) should be noted. Russian-British relations in the latter half of 18 to early 20 centuries as they say were notable for tough confrontation which was due considerably to their aspirations in the East. All the 19 century the «Great Game» of British ruling elite lasts, during which Britain tried to prevent weakening of its positions in the region and strengthening, particularly, «Russian threat» to India.

The study of Terentyeva (2003) dedicated to the Soviet historiography of the origins and laws governing relations development between Russia and Britain is of special interest. Soviet historians characterized «Russian threat» to India as a propaganda myth. Arguments seem to be fair-campaign to India would be a gamble doomed to failure. All specific projects of the military campaign to India were rejected not only because of the lack of financial resources or military power but primarily in virtue of political inexpediency.

At the same time modern researchers concur that the phenomenon of «Russian threat» to India has had a marked influence on the formation and development of the foreign affairs conception of the British Empire in the latter half of 18 to early 20 centuries. This phenomenon

became a component of British foreign policy, a basis made for effect of aggressive British course in the region. It has showed the metamorphosis of Central Asia (Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Turkestan, Afghanistan, Iran, Northern India) into the top base of confrontation between Russia, the United Kingdom and Asian countries. The «Great Game» was a dominant of the relationship between the two Empires for a long period of time, involving in its orbit countries and nations, rulers and armies, grinding means of empires and fates of people, reshaping the boundaries and changing the geopolitical situation in the region.

Domestic historiography settled the problem of chronological classification of the British-Russian-Indian relations history of the latter half of 18 to early 20 centuries. Domestic researchers studied a lot of aspects of the subjects that is confirmed by thesis research of Mratkuzina (2001). As the involvement of area in the sphere of vital interests of Russia and Britain rises their relations have passed through several stages.

The latter half of 18 to early 19 centuries is a period of a large-scale political and diplomatic, trade and economic ties of states and nations of the West and the East that led to attempts of redrawing the political map of Central Asia. 19 century begin in political life of Europe with the growth of Napoleonic France influence. Anglo-French rivalry that took the form of political maneuvering, economic blockade and diplomatic battles determined the international situation in the world. Both states tried to secure an alliance with the largest empire in Europe-Russia.

## THE MAIN PART

There exists a version that Napoleon wanted Russia primarily as the most important transfer point on the way to India. That's why Indian aspect in the war of 1812 was not a sensation. But historians often suppress this fact due to the feeling of incredibility of Napoleon project although it was a bee in Napoleon's bonnet. He understood that subjugation of Hindustan would inevitably lead Britain to collapse. Sudden transformation of the most dangerous enemy in the most staunch ally had been fascinating Napoleon towards to Paul in fact, according to Serebrenitsky (2012) «in his scope of ambitions and unreality of projects a son of Catherine the Great was a figure equal to Napoleon».

Among the foreign policy actions of the Russian Empire which caused the international phenomenon there was a departure of 22 thousand Don Cossacks of chieftain Orlov in campaign against India as evidenced by the publication of documents on the organization of military expedition in January to March 1801. Project was not implemented because of the murder of Paul by conspirators and new Emperor Alexander I gave an order to return Cossacks. But the news of Russian campaign against India gave Britain a trump to ground the struggle for superiority in Asia. Therefore Britain made every possible effort for the plans of India conquest by Russian-French troops fell to the ground. As noted by Reshetnikov (2012), it is «the British Ambassador who funded a head of conspiracy against Paul I-Earl Palena and gave him gold for attempted murder».

The extensive material of Anglo-French-Russian rivalry towards India in the latter half of 18 to early 19 centuries is analyzed in papers. In the first instance the British succeeded to secure a union with Russia. The Russians in ally with the British under the command of A.V. Suvorov fought with the French in Italy. Russian officers served on ships of the British Royal Navy. This aspect of problem is well illustrated in the diary of officer Yu. F. Lisiansky on navigation to the shores of India on the board of British frigate «Septer».

South coast and northeastern Indian border were considered to be the most protected by British Navy. The British held their ground here. But Northwest of India was a vulnerable section of the border as evidenced by documents. It was herefrom in 1801 Napoleon and Paul I intended to start the invasion of India. However, a large-scale battle for India was complicated by the fact that Russia was engaged in the development and arrangement of its suburbs. Therefore at the time the plans mainly of the expansion of trade ties with India were nurtured. The publication of the note of Lieutenant

General V. Zubov on the possibility of establishing the permanent trade ties between Russia and India is evidence.

By the middle of 19 century against the background of international crises and revitalization of imperial policy of Britain and Russia in Central Asia the projects of campaign against Hindustan had reappeared. This was connected, primarily with the missions of Indian princes in Russia and requests for help in the fight against British colonialists. In this regard the documents of Principality of Indore ruler's commission and Prince Rao Raja Tula Singh Bahadur's mission with the letters of Indian princes to Russian Tsar which are being studied by Raikov are of some interest.

By the middle of 19 century despite the unreality of Russian invasion of India in the feasibility of which the British did not believe, the Russophobia had become an integral part of British politics. Abstracts of the «defence of India», «super-aggressive Russia» its loyalty to mythical testament of Peter the Great were intended to disguise the aggressive ambitions and methods of colonial policy of Britain which plans extended to the infiltration in the Caucasus, Turkestan, to the shores of the Caspian Sea. Long before the conquest of territory of the Russian Empire, the British threat to Central Asian khanates had emerged, the details of which are discussed in the study by Postnikov (2003).

Veiled by mythical «Russian threat to India», the British expansionist policy has increased markedly in the latter half of 19 century. At the same time the «defensive concept» of British colonial policy established in British historiography. During exacerbation of Anglo-Russian relations the promotion of this version had been intensifying from the parliamentary rostrum and in the press. Russian social thought had also been actively discussing Russia's role in Central Asia, the pros and cons of a demonstration of military force by the British Empire. All these problems are analyzed in the thesis by Smirnova (2004).

In contexts of new situation in the region a ratio of impossibility and reality of Russian foreign policy projects changed radically. Archive materials confirm that «Russian threat» to India in the latter half of 19 century became real. Publication of memorandum reports indicate the development of plans of expedition to India by Generals S.A. Khrulev, N.G. Stoletov and other headed by the Chief of General Staff, the Minister of War D.A. Miliutin participated in the discussion and the Emperor was aware of this. The documents about the trip of Russian soldiers for maneuvers in India to gather information on the state of the country also indicate it for example, report of Lieutenant Colonel N. Ya. Shneur.

In this context, diaries of I.P. Minaev may be mentioned which however were published with numerous edits. Both trips of I.P. Minaev were carried out by order of the military department and represent a report to the Ministry of War. Published documents allow to assess fuller and deeper the views of the founder of Russian Indology.

Some officers such as generals Yegorov and Sobolev, actively published articles and books, the leitmotif of which was the idea of the Russian campaign against India. Currently this range of problems is being actively studied by the domestic researchers, particularly, Kubanov (2003).

As noted by Remnev (2001), only the completion of joining of Central Asia to Russia at the end of 19 century contributed to the suspension of the expansionist aspirations of Britain, aimed at Inner Asia.

But the collection of information on India in the late 19 to early 20 centuries, due to the interest in this country of Russian society and government institutions, walked in all directions the special among which was the search for information of military and statistical nature. The military department which received reports from consuls and intelligence agents, military and statistical descriptions and data sheets was specially engaged in gathering of such information. Specialists with knowledge of languages were required to perform such research. For example, Lieutenant General Yermolov was sent to India as a military agent. Following the results of visit by Kozhekina (1995) mentioned, he submitted a report to the General Staff with the following information: a manuscript of diary, map of India, schemes and drawings, album of views and photos of northwestern border of India.

## RESULTS

In the first decade of 20 century the phenomenon of «Russian threat» to India in foreign policy circles, both of Russia and Britain became an impossible idea, the final chimera.

In public and academic circles a Russian theme of «campaign against India» was discussed in the context of issues related to the social and political, social and cultural, religious, military and geographical situation in the Middle and Central Asia. From the viewpoint of its practicability the assessments of modern domestic researchers who consider that actions of Britain in the East boiled down to protect British India from any real or imaginary threats are interesting. These aspects of the problem are being studied by Russian military specialist and publicist (Shyrokod, 2003).

The possibility of penetration of British intelligence agents in the region were being more and more limited by strengthening of the colonial system of the Russian

Empire. Nevertheless, plans for its weakening right up to dismemberment were being developed. Such attempt was made by Britain after the events of October 1917 when during the anti-Soviet intervention the Anglo-French agreement on the division of Soviet Russia into the «spheres of action» was signed. According to this document Central Asia had to go into the sphere of influence of Britain. Details of the plans are described in the publication of Mitrokhin (1998) based on the materials of the funds of the National Archives of India. Subjects of the documents found out by him are various and published documents elucidate the methods of British penetration in Central Asia.

Since, the twenties of 20 century the phenomenon of «Soviet threat» to India has been already actualizing. It was closely associated with the pre-revolutionary tradition of the problem statement.

## CONCLUSION

Studying of Anglo-Russian relations in the Central Asian region and in particular, the phenomenon of so called «Russian threat» to India in the latter half of 18 to early 20 centuries is impossible without the involvement of a wide range of sources. This problem remained little-studied in Soviet period first of all because of the insufficient quantity of documentary sources introduced into scientific research. Modern publications of the majority of documents and commentaries discover the unknown and unfamiliar facts.

Source base on the considered problem introduced into scientific research is not complete. In the meantime the development of accumulated source studying material makes it possible to fix the current level of comprehension of the considered problem.

Current geopolitical situation in Central Asia dictates the need to study concrete historical and historiographical components of the phenomenon of history and prospects for Russian-Indian relations.

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