

CENTRAL ASIA AND KASHMIR  
(TRADE ROUTES)  
NOT TO SCALE

# **CENTRAL ASIA AND KASHMIR**

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**A STUDY IN THE CONTEXT  
OF ANGLO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY**

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## Preface

Due to its geographical proximity to Central Asia and the existence of overland caravan routes linking the two regions, Kashmir played an important role in the process of Central Asia's intercourse with India in the political, commercial and cultural domains both in the ancient and medieval times. But in the modern times the Anglo-Russian rivalry lent a new dimension to these contacts. From the early nineteenth century onwards when Britain and Tsarist Russia emerged as the main contestants in Asia, Central Asia became an object of colonial rivalry. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Britain had assumed paramount power in India after she annexed Punjab in 1849. This brought her empire in India into direct contact with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Likewise, Russia too after consolidating its position in the Kazakh Steppes was moving ahead in Central Asia. As a result, Central Asia was turned into the venue of Anglo-Russian rivalry which also had its roots in their earlier antagonism in Europe. When Russia found her forward movement blocked in Europe after her defeat in the Crimean War (1854-56), she focussed her attention on its expansion in the southerly direction towards the Central Asian Khanates which offered least opposition. Thus the two Great Powers expanded from two opposite directions without engaging themselves in any direct military confrontation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the two empires found themselves face to face in Asia separated only by a thin wedge of the Pamirs. Although the Pamir Boundary Agreement of 1895 helped in diluting the intensity of this two-power rivalry, yet it did not bring an end to it. However, with the emergence of a common German threat, the two powers began to

cooperate in the changed circumstances. But with the establishment of Soviet power in Russia the whole region was once again drawn into the centre of world attention. The British consolidated their hold on the North-West Frontier Province and the area in and around Kashmir with a view to using it as a springboard for intervention in Central Asia. They took pains in strengthening the military establishments in this whole frontier belt. In the process the normal intercourse between Central Asia and India via Kashmir was greatly disrupted. The British authorities in India sought to justify these measures as steps to prevent the spread of Bolshevism.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the extent and pattern of political, commercial and cultural exchanges between Central Asia and Kashmir was conditioned by the state of diplomatic relations existing between the three empires of the world – Britain, Russia and China. When in mid-nineteenth century Central Asia and Kashmir had become parts of Russia and Britain respectively, the process of mutual exchanges between the two regions was largely inhibited as a result of various restrictions imposed by the two rival powers. Due to its strategic location vis-a-vis Central Asia, Kashmir came to occupy a pivotal position in the British strategy of checkmating Tsarist Russia. Though Russia perceived India as the sensitive nerve of the British empire, which when touched would put a brake on the British interference with the Russian interests in the Balkans in Europe, Britain was more concerned with the possible psychological impact of the Russian predominance in Central Asia over the disaffected chiefs and people in India. This explained the strategic importance of Kashmir and its frontier territories which commanded the overland routes from Central Asia to India. Besides, this area provided to the British convenient bases wherefrom the Russian movements in Central Asia were monitored. The geographical contiguity and cultural affinity of Central Asia with Kashmir were important factors which influenced the formulation of British policy towards Kashmir and its frontier dependencies.

The 'great game' has been the theme of several studies, most of which assign a central place to Afghanistan or Central Asia or both. This study aims at breaking a new ground by making a critical analysis of the political contacts, trade relations and cultural exchanges between Central Asia and Kashmir in the light of the 'great game' played by Britain and Russia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It not

only discusses the impact of the Anglo-Russian rivalry on the conduct of these bilateral contacts but also examines ramifications of the 'great game' and its implications for developments on and around Kashmir frontiers during this period. The study is rounded off by an investigation of the British policy towards Kashmir in the wake of the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia.

This book is the first part of a multi-volume study of Central Asian relations with Kashmir in modern times. Its scope is limited to the territories lying within Soviet Central Asia, that is, the former Western Turkestan, Khanates of Khiva, Kokand and Bukhara on the one hand, and the Dogra State of Jammu and Kashmir including Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan and the frontier districts of Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Punial, Chilas, Chitral, Kuh-Ghizar, Ishkoman and Dir on the other. Presently this area corresponds approximately to the Soviet Socialist Republics of Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Turkmenia on the one side and the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir which also includes the area under the occupation of Pakistan and China on the other. And the relations between Kashmir and Kashgaria or Xinjiang, that is, Chinese Central Asia shall be discussed in the subsequent volume.

The work is based on primary sources such as the records of the National Archives of India including the 'Secret Consultations,' 'Proceedings of the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India' and also the diplomatic exchanges between British, Russian and Chinese governments on Central Asian affairs. Besides, the secret diaries, memoranda and political reports submitted by a number of British officials and agents employed in remote parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Punjab, Kashmir and its frontier outposts have also been extensively used. The annual trade reports of Ladakh and Chinese Turkestan and the administration reports of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab have provided the data relevant to the study of Indo-Central Asian trade that passed through Kashmir. The old English and Persian records that are preserved in the State Archives Repository, Jammu and the local unpublished histories and travel accounts of Central Asia by Kashmiri authors, which are preserved in the Research Department Library, Srinagar provided a deep insight into the developments from a local point of view. Mitchell's translations of important articles in Russian newspapers and journals and also the travelogues of Danibegov, Yefremov and Abdul Karim helped in understanding the Russian and

Central Asian viewpoint. In order to cross-check or corroborate the information derived from the British Indian sources, the author has also used the works of leading Soviet and pro-Soviet writers and scholars. Besides, the microfilms of Russian archival records, that are available in the National Archives of India, have also been consulted.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Devendra Kaushik, Professor of Soviet Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University for his inspiring guidance and encouragement in the course of my research studies. He not only stimulated my interest in this study but also helped me to better visualise and understand numerous issues relating to it.

I feel obliged to Prof. N.N. Raina, a freedom fighter and nuclear physicist, Sh. B. P. Sharma, a veteran journalist and President of Dogri Research Institute, Jammu and Prof. M.K. Teng, Head, Department of Political Science, Kashmir University for their valuable suggestions. My thanks are also due to Dr. K.N. Pandita, ex-Director, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar and Dr. S.S. Deora of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University for their help.

I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy and cooperation received from the staff of the National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Indian Council of Affairs Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library and Central Secretariat Library, all in New Delhi; State Archives Repository, S.R.S. Library, and Jammu University Library, all in Jammu; Oriental Research Library, and S.P.S. Library both in Srinagar, where I studied the materials used in this book. I am especially indebted to the Director, National Archives of India and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India for granting me access to the 'closed period' records of the Ministry.

I am grateful to my parents and my wife for their encouragement without which this work could not have been completed in time.

K. Warikoo

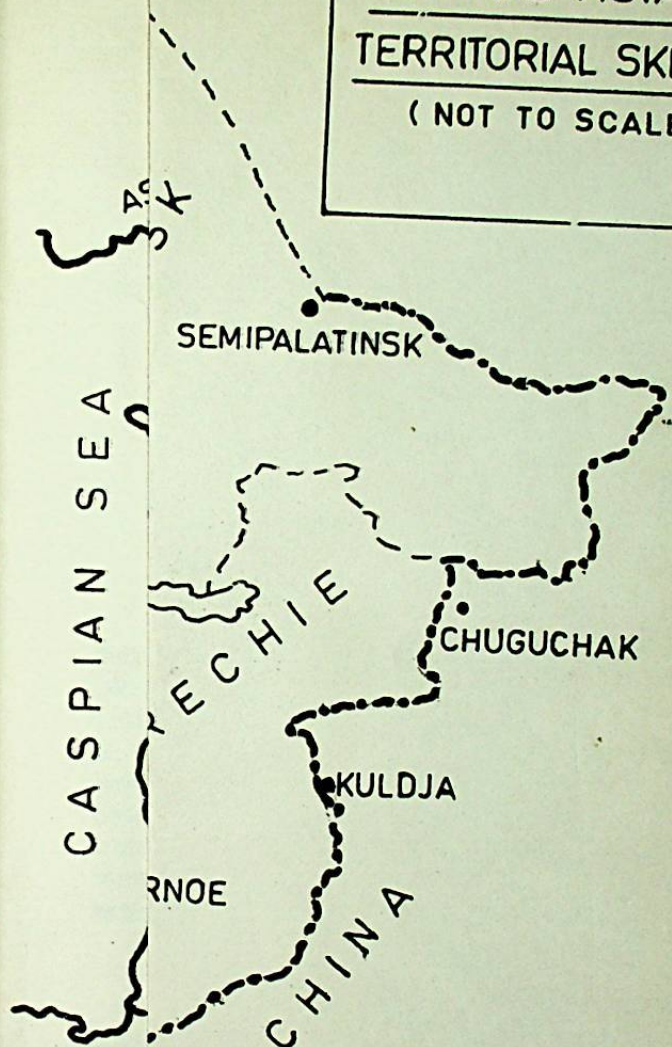
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## Abbreviations

Comp.	Compiler
Ed.	Editor
Extl.	External
Frontr.	Frontier
GOL	Government of India
Intl.	Intelligence
J&K.	Jammu and Kashmir
JKA.	Jammu and Kashmir State Archives Repository, Jammu.
KW.	Keep with
NAI.	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
n.d.	No date
N.W.	North West
OER.	Old English Records, J&K State Archives Repository, Jammu
OS.	Old style
OSD.	Officer on Special Duty
PR.	Persian Records
Pol.	Political
P.C.	Political Consultations
Pseud.	Pseudonym
RDL.	Research Department Library, J&K Government, Srinagar.
Rev.	Revenue
Sec.	Secret
S.C.	Secret Consultations
S.H.	Secret Home
S.I.	Secret Intelligence

RUSSIAN  
CENTRAL ASIA  
TERRITORIAL SKETCH  
( NOT TO SCALE )





CENTRAL ASIA AND KASHMIR  
(TRADE ROUTES)  
NOT TO SCALE

Kashmir has played an important role in India's relations with Central Asia due to its geographical proximity and cultural affinity with that region since ancient times. In modern times the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia imparted a new dimension to these relations. Due to its strategic location vis-a-vis Central Asia, Kashmir and its frontier territories of Ladakh, Gilgit, Baltistan, Hunja, Nagar, Yasin, Chilas, Punial, Chitral and Ishkoman came to occupy a pivotal position in the British strategy of checkmating Tsarist Russia. In this 'great game' the British used Kashmir as a frontier listening post to monitor the Russian movements in Central Asia and also as a spring-board for their forward moves.

The 'great game' has been the theme of several studies dealing with Afghanistan or Central Asia. This study breaks a new ground by making an integrated study of the political, commercial and cultural contacts between Central Asia and Kashmir in the light of the 'great game' played by Britain and Russia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The study is rounded off by an investigation of the British policy towards Kashmir in the wake of the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia.

This book is based on original and hitherto untapped source materials including the diplomatic exchanges between the British, Russian and Chinese governments on Central Asian Affairs, contemporary accounts, local histories and also the Russian sources.

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