

THE CONQUEST OF CENTRAL ASIA BY THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE: FACTORS AND CAUSES.

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Russia's state interests have shifted several times during the course of its centuries-long history. It became a powerful Russian Empire with abundant natural and land resources after annexing huge lands "beyond the Stone," clearing a path to the Black and Baltic Seas, and securing its hold on the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Khanates. Many major European nations wanted to forge strong ties with it around the end of the 19th century. Due to its unique Eurasian location, Russia was able to determine the strategic focus of its activities.

Russia turned "to the East" rather than giving in to the pressure to participate in the reconstruction of Europe, which was applied by pro-German circles in the court spheres, bolstered by the dynastic kinship of the royal courts, on the one hand, and a powerful pro-French group, supported by a number of loans from Parisian banks, on the other. Since the 1990s of the previous century, the Asian orientation has taken center stage among its national objectives.

The intricacies of the situation on the eastern fringes of the country, in contrast to its European half, demand a synthesis in the study of the external and internal elements of the course taken, according to an analysis of Russia's policy in Asia at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries. They should be viewed as being inextricably linked to the Asian region since there, more than anyplace else, their responsibilities are intermingled and it is sometimes even hard to establish which area a certain issue belongs to (the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, for example).

Such specifics were realized by the tsarist government, therefore, the jurisdiction of governors-general and governors in Asian regions included the right of direct contacts with neighboring countries. Almost any significant step of the Russian Empire to strengthen its Asian suburbs caused concern of the great powers, initiated their activity, which, in turn, forced Russia to take retaliatory steps.

The conducted research allows us to draw the following main conclusions. The combination of the processes of the unfolding industrialization of Russia and the gradual increase of crisis phenomena in the system of international relations at the turn of the XIX - XX centuries actualized the need to balance its interests in the West and East, which caused its turn to Asia. A number of factors contributed to this. Firstly, in contrast to the Near and Middle East, the Pacific Coast in the period under review remained a region of the world in which the great Powers actively fought for influence. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 brought a new actor - Japan - to the forefront of international politics, thereby upsetting the existing balance of power not only in this region, but also on the world stage as a whole. From now on, not only the "immovable" China, but also the dynamically developing ambitious Mikado empire opposed Russia on the Far Eastern borders.

Secondly, the open struggle with the economically and militarily powerful Western European states was obviously a losing one for Russia. And the rapidly progressing young Russian industry needed raw materials. Owning Siberia and having established close ties with Asian neighbors, Russia reliably and for a long time provided its industry not only with raw materials, but also with sales markets.

Thirdly, the development of Russia as a continental state required access to open warm seas, the absence of which excluded it from the oceanic exchange characteristic of Europe. The Far Eastern "gateway" to the World Ocean became an urgent necessity for her, without which it was almost impossible for her own further progressive development, as well as connection to world economic relations.

Fourthly, the issue of expanding the acreage was on the agenda, due to the rapid population growth, which exacerbated the problem of land shortage in the inner provinces of the empire.

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