CHAPTER I

RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS
IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Russia started playing a decisive role in Central Asia after the fall of Tashkent. On June 14, 1865, Tashkent the first large town in Central Asia was seized by the Czarist soldiers. The occupation of the city marked a new period in the relations between Russia and Central Asia. It signalled an imminent end to the hitherto existing religious, economic, military, cultural and diplomatic relations between them, some of which had begun a thousand years before.

The first ever-formal relations between Russia and Central Asia could be noticed in 986 A.D. The Kievan princes interested in Islam looked forward to Khwarazm for Islamic instructions. The Shah of Khwarazm not only welcomed the Russians with rich gifts but also sent one of his Imams to teach Islamic rules to them. But the suspicion on the part of Russians to undergo circumcision, not eating pork and quitting wine were not agreeable to Russian Orthodox traditions. The disagreement between Islamic and Russians orthodox tradition failed to bring Russians within the fold of Central Asian tradition. An

opportunity for Central Asians to come closer and employ religion for tying this largest Slavic group to the East rather than the West was lost.

Though the question of faith always coloured the relations between Russia and Central Asia, religion never became a primary issue, at least until the fall of Tashkent between the two regions. Trade and diplomatic relations of the Central Asian Khanates with Russia were more or less of a regular nature. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the exchange of missions between Russia and Central Asian Khanates, the valuable information about the region was shared. The lands of Central Asia provided trade opportunities between Russia, China and other Asian states.

Russia's advancement into Asia began in the sixteenth century. Since the sixteenth century and the beginning of the great expansion of the Muscovite city-state, Russian state increased its domain by a continual process of acquiring and developing adjacent territories. Russia's movement, in east and south into Asia, was a gradual and continuing process, directed to protect the new borderlands for strategic and economic reasons. The economic wealth of Central Asian land and the opportunities it offered to commerce, reinforced the political desire of Russia to expand in Central Asia.
Russia's penetration into Central Asia became possible in the sixteenth century because of the disintegration of the Golden Horde. In the first half of the fifteenth century the mighty Horde broke into seven Khanates. Each of these Khanates was capable of creating havoc, but none of them commanded the same fear and respect, as the Golden Horde before the sixteenth century. The disunity among the new hordes enabled Moscow's princes to exploit their differences. It was in 1480 when the absorption of Novgorad took place, and Ivan III shook off the Tatar yoke.\(^2\) For several decades after Ivan III terminated the Tatar yoke, relations between the Russia and Central Asia alternated between raids, wars and parleys.

The Khanate of Kazan, at the junction of the Volga and Kama, was important for Muscovy's security and ambition. It blocked the Muscovy's access to the Caspian Sea, the Central Asia, and to Siberia. The action of the Ivan III opened the rich steppes of the middle Volga and the upper Don to the penetration of Muscovites. The control of the entire basin of the Volga and its tributaries was realized, when Ivan IV conquered the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan between 1550 and 1556. Thus for the

\(^2\) The Mongol conquest and the havoc it caused in Rus principalities was the beginning of what contemporary sources referred to as the "Tatar Yoke". The most visible feature of this yoke was savage physical destruction.
first time Muscovy's direct access to the Caspian Sea, Central Asia and Siberia was achieved.

The Russian base for direct military action against Central Asia was provided by the Cossack settlements in the Yaik (Ural) river outposts. During the collapse of central government in Russia around the turn of the seventeenth century, these Russian frontiers' men penetrated into some of the Khanates of Central Asia. The service of the Don Cossack and the Ukrainian Cossacks were skillfully utilized by Russia for its expansionist activities. In most of the times Cossacks remained loyal to the Tsar and proved very handy in its struggle against the enemies. But the real advance of Russia towards the Khanates began chiefly in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Russians under Nicholas I made substantial inroads into Central Asia. Their control over the Kazakh steppes in the 1830s and constructions of a new line of fortification and Cossack settlements were instrumental in this direction. The Khanates of Kokand, Bokhara and Khiva came in close contact with Russians. The unsuccessful expedition against Khiva in 1839 was followed by setting up of military bases at Igiz in 1845, Perovsk in 1853 and Alma Ata in 1854. As a consequence, more

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3 For Don Cossacks and Ukrainian Cossacks, as cited in Basil Dmytryshyn, A History of Russia (New Delhi, Prentice Hall of India, 1977), pp. 198-200.
than half of Central Asia was under the Russian Control during the reign of Nicholas I:

Russian attitude towards Central Asian Khanates was modified after the Khiva's failure. Instead of sending a sweeping military expedition, they planned to proceed slowly but methodically in the Central Asian region. Their interest, not in Europe but in Asia, was further emphasized by the disastrous defeat of Russia in the Crimean war. The Crimean war, at first, had the effect of arresting Russian progress in Central Asia, but after its disastrous conclusion led to a renewal of Russian interest in the region. For a while, at least, the Czar had to give up the great foreign engagements which had involved him in the Balkans and the Near East, and he found it necessary to reinforce his position in Central Asia. For Russia, which was on the path of capitalist development, control of the region became important due to its unrivalled market and suspected rich raw materials.

The capitalist development taking place in Russia could be seen reaching mercantile stage in the middle of the seventeenth century, the manufacturing stage soon after the middle of the eighteenth century, and the industrial stage in the years following the emancipation of serfs in 1861. For Russia, the emancipation edict of 1861 proved to bring capitalist development from above, as the socio-economic features of the
society were antipathic to it. Alexander II showed his awareness about
the emancipation edict of 1861 in his famous speech in 1865 to a section
of the nobility by saying it as ‘the mainstay of the throne’. The Tsar
declared: “it is better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait for the
time when it will begin to abolish itself spontaneously from below.”

From the economic point of view, the first half of the nineteenth
century may be noted as underdeveloped agriculture, persistence of
serfdom, wars raising havoc with the nations finances and primitive
technology and inadequate transportation, aversion to industrialization
by the nobility and half-hearted economic policies for industrialization
by the country's leaders. But it is important to note that the periods of
quick and massive industrial development are usually preceded by the
long periods of preparation of slower, less dynamic, less comprehensive
change. Therefore, it can be said that it was a period of sluggishness for
the different sectors of the economy.

On the other hand, a remarkable change in the population of the
country was noticed and was considered to be the basic resource of the
country. The Russian population which was 37.5 million in 1795 rose

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Barnatinsky, 1857-1864 (The Hague, 1964); in his introduction Rieber argues that
military reforms provided the decisive impetus for freeing the serfs.
upto 61.5 million in 1838. According to the official census of 1812, Russia's taxable population stood at 41 million. By 1851 that figure climbed to 69 million. The tremendous increase in the population could have been, to an extent, due to the Russian conquest but it has its impact in almost all sectors of the economy. The healthy birth rate, decrease in the infant mortality and increase in the life expectancy contributed to the growth of cities and swelling of labour force.

Between the mid-twenties and late fifties the enterprises and the workers increased threefold in Ukraine, Baltic, around Moscow and St Petersburg. These were the centers of embryonic industrial revolution, witnessing agricultural progress though at a slower pace. Production of cast-iron got doubled within a span of just 35 years from 1825 to 1860. The period witnessed a start in the expansion of transport and communication. The tinge of mechanization in transport was initiated by the Tsar himself. He was of the belief that the prosperity of his subjects would gain most with the construction of rail line. The first such project was finished by 1837 and the second one in 1851.  

5 Basil Dmytryshyn, n. 3, p. 433.
In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia played an active role in Central Asia due to the changes taking place in Russia's economic, political and socio-cultural life. First and foremost among them, was the capitalist development reaching its peak in this period. The Reform of 1861 was the first step for converting the feudal, serf-owning monarchy into a bourgeois monarchy. The capitalist relations which had been taking shape within the feudal system before the reform, now became sharp and dominant in Russia.

A great achievement in sciences, arts and letters was witnessed in this period. Exceptional progress was made in science and the creative arts. The interaction between the scientists, writers, musicians, artists and actors of Russia and the west increased immensely. Leading role of Russians in science and culture was recognized everywhere. The progressive movements of Europe and America found a response in Russia and the emancipation struggle of the intellectuals, workers and peasants of Russia gained sympathy with the progressives abroad.

In industry, the capitalist development was at a faster rate compared to agriculture. The industrial revolution in Russia which began in the thirties and forties was completed by the eighties of the nineteenth century. In the chief branches of industry, petty producers and manufacturers were replaced by factories. In the light industries, cotton
goods production developed with particular intensity in the Moscow industrial area. Thirty years after the Reform of 1861, Cotton fabric production increased fourfold. Beginning with the seventies, coal output increased eight folds between 1871 and 1891. The oil industry was developed in the Baku area and by the end of the century the annual output reached to ten millions tons. With the development of Ukraine, in addition to the Urals the iron industry made a big advance. The engineering industry, with its centre in St. Petersburg, underwent rapid development after the Reform Act.  

A fillip to the industrial development was given by the simultaneous development in the transportation sector of the country. The core industries and the light industries needed the investments in the infrastructural development, which boosted faster growth in the economy. In 1861, there were only 1,500 kms of railway in Russia, but in the twenty years that followed, fifteen times this length of railway line was built. 

The most important feature of Russia's industrial development was the emergence of big and very big enterprises. As a result of it,

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8 Ibid., p.247.
Russia left behind the most highly developed capitalist countries, including the young and industrially powerful United States. Parallel to these enterprises, however, small scale, semi-peasant industry as well as medium-sized industry accounted for a very significant proportion of the country's total industrial output. With the increase in the industrial output the trade activities increased.

Domestic trade before emancipation was exceedingly primitive due to the absence of roads, obsolete means of transportation, non-existence of credit institutions and by the low purchasing power of the population. But after emancipation, with the improved transport, gradual establishment of credit institutions, modest rise in the purchasing power of the population and the appearance of new products, the domestic trade of Russia increased at a faster rate. By the end of the nineteenth century, Russia's domestic trade reached 4,500 million ruble and employed more than 800,000 people. Some of the big enterprises inside the country increased their output by 300 percent during the last three decades of the century.

The volume of foreign trade increased from 1861 to the mid-nineties to the tune of 250 percent. Chief exports for Russia during this

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9 Basil Dmytryshyn, n. 5. p. 436.
period was agricultural produce, mainly grain for the interest of the landowners and the state treasury. Ukrainian wheat emerged as a new item of Russia's export in 1840, and by 1860 it accounted for 35 percent of the empire's total export. Russia's principal trade partner was England with which trading was conducted through Baltic sea ports and foreign ships, whereas overland trade was conducted with China, Central Asia, and the nations of Central Europe.\(^\text{10}\)

In this period, intensive development of Capitalism in Russia and gaining access to new markets became an important factor for the growth of its domestic and foreign trade. By fifties, the cheaper machine-made British and German textiles wiped out the Russian products from the US market. In addition to it USA itself was constructing its own factories. In such circumstances, Russian industrial circles began to pay more serious attention to Central Asia as their external market. Internal market being small, acquisition of a wide market in Central Asia for Russian textiles, silk and iron ores was suggested.

As early as 1836, a special Committee was appointed by Tsar Nicholas I to examine various suggestions about trade relations of Russia with Asia. In 1849, a distinguished geographer and traveller Chikhachov drew attention to the importance of Central Asian trade for the Russian

Empire. According to him the absence of Anglo-American competition was a point in favour of increasing Russian trade with this region. A programme for the development of economic relations of the Russian Empire with Central Asia was formulated by P.I. Nebolsin who at the instance of the Russian Geographical Society, visited Orenburg and the Caspian region in 1850 to collect trade information. He advocated for an active policy in Central Asia. Thus, before the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, trade became the driving force for the Russian industry to expand its horizons in Central Asia. Domestic market being small and European competition being tough, the major plan was for expansion activities in Central Asia. This view was clearly elucidated in 1826 when Major General Alekseder I Verigin submitted "position papers" to Nicholas I. In it, the necessity to occupy Khiva as the sole means for widening and conducting trade safety in Central Asia was discussed. Verigin admitted that "Russian industry and trade because of low standards and inefficiency cannot compete successfully either at

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11 For the first time, Russia conceiving Central Asia as an important trade link in the first half of nineteenth century is discussed in detail in Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the early 19th Century* (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970), pp. 31-34.
home or in Europe against European competition. Thus Central Asia under Russian mastery is required as a captive market for its survival.\textsuperscript{12} 

Under the garb of trade and economic interest, Russia’s systematic expansion into Central Asia began in the second half of the nineteenth century. Prior to it, the economic relation between Russia and Kazakhstan were growing stronger in the eighteenth century. On October 10, 1731, an oath of allegiance was administered to Abulkhayr Khan by Russia, in which the Kazakh Khan promised to protect the Kazakh-Russian borders, defend trade caravans in the plains, provide troops when needed, and pay tribute in wild animal skins. In return, Russia undertook to confirm in his tribe a perpetual line of Khans and to build a fort at the confluence of the Or and Yaik (Ural) rivers for his defence.\textsuperscript{13} This recognition of Russia’s suzerainty by the Kazakh Khan was natural for strengthening economic ties with Russia on the one hand and getting protection from the aggression of Chinese and Central Asian Khanates on the other.


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, p.48.
Russia's penetration into Central Asia started in two phases: from 1731 to 1854 the capture of Kazakh steppes; and the rest of the region in a systematic way from 1865-81. In the first phase, Russia through trade and diplomacy accentuated differences between the Kazakh Hordes and thus weakened them. The Hordes sought, and secured, agreements with the Tsar - the small Horde signing a treaty in (1731), followed by the middle Horde (1732) and the great Horde (1742). However, the relationship between Russia and Kazakhstan did not materialize strongly. The periodic uprisings by Kazakhs further added to its failures. Russia in a gradual way started tightening its grip over Kazakh land. Tsar Alexander I (1801-25) and Nicholas I (1825-55) deposed Kazakh rulers, called Khans, starting with that of middle Horde (1822) and ending with the great Horde (1848). Thus after "encircling the Kazakh territory, the Russians embarked on their next stage of empire building in Asia. They confronted the Khanates of Khiva, Kokand and the Emirates of Bukhara, comprising a region with a long and glorious history, which was now in comparative decline".14

In the second phase, the Crimean war initially arrested the Russian progress in Central Asia. But the disastrous conclusion of it was

that Russia renewed its interest in the region. The Treaty of Paris forced Russia to surrender most of the rights it had won from the Turks in a century and a quarter since Peter the Great. Though under Alexander II, Russians did erase "the humiliation of 1856" in Europe. But they also continued to make enormous conquests in Central Asia and in the Far East.

For Russia, control of Central Asia was important because of its unrivalled market and suspected rich materials, as it was on the path of capitalist development. Around 1860-62 interest in Central Asia increased, as all Europe was feeling the effect of the American Civil War which was depriving it of Cotton. At this time, fifteen Muscovite merchants asked the minister of finance for government aid to seek in Central Asia, especially Bukhara, the raw materials which the American crisis was denying them.15

The renewed campaign in Central Asia was commenced in May, 1864. A systematic and continuous success in the second phase was due to the ambitious officers of Tsars such as Cherniaev, N.A. Verevkhin, C.P. Von Kaufman, and M.D. Skobelev. Superior organization and better equipment on the part of Russia helped it to win the city of Turkistan,

15 Edward Allworth, n. 9, p. 131.
then Chimkent in the summer of 1864. On June 17, 1865 the city of Tashkent surrendered and in 1868 the entire Khanate of Khokand became a Russian protectorate. After an unsuccessful native rebellion in 1876, the Russians incorporated the protectorate into the empire and renamed it Fergana. Samarkand was captured in 1867, there by sealing the fate of Bukhara, which also became a Russian protectorate. The subjugation of Khiva was completed on August 12, 1873, when Khan signed a peace treaty without arguing the conditions imposed by Russia. Lastly the possession of Ashkhabad on Jan 15, 1881 and annexation of Mari on January 1, 1884 concluded the annexation of Central Asia.

The ease with which the Russians conquered Central Asia alarmed the British, who feared for their own control of Afghanistan and India. On February 29, 1884, the British government protested the annexation of Mari. The Russians tried to justify their penetration on the grounds of "historical necessity", security, and what they termed as "civilising mission". But the more Russians justified, the more suspicious the British became. Thus to avoid a seemingly inevitable conflict, Russia proposed a joint delimitation of the Afghan frontier. The delimitation of Pamir frontier in 1895, which gave Russia Rushan, Shughnam and part of

16 Ibid., p. 149
Varkhan, which were all linked with the Bukhara protectorate, put an end to Russian expansion in Central Asia and marked the acquisition of a vast new empire.17

The Tsarist government pursued a policy of colonial oppression in Central Asia. The population suffered from the lawless acts of the Tsarist generals and civil servants and from the exploitation of Russian capitalists and the wealthy section of the local population.

The annexation of Central Asia nevertheless was seen by later Soviet scholars as objectively beneficial to its peoples. At the time of annexation, the people of the region were living in feudal and even patriarchal-feudal conditions. With their inclusions into the Russian Empire, relatively more progressive forms of capitalist economy began to penetrate into the area. The cultural level of the people began to improve although very slowly, and the first secular schools were opened.

The most important part for the people of Central Asia was that they established close contact with the Russian people and other peoples of Russia joined them in their common revolutionary struggle. Thousands of Russian workers were employed in Central Asia, and a local proletariat began to take shape and to go through a school of

17 Ibid., p.149.
political training in company with and under the influence of their Russian brothers. Central Asia as a whole, however, did not follow the path of the capitalist development. Small peasant farming weighed down by debts to usurers and by numerous feudal duties, remained the chief form of economy in Turkestan throughout the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century.

Thus, from the very first days after the merger of Central Asia with Russia the people of Central Asia established contact not only with the Tsarists colonialists, Russian kulaks and traders, but also with Russian peasants and industrial workers, scientists, teachers, writers and revolutionaries. Russia after becoming the Centre of the World revolutionary movement and forming its militant revolutionary party as the vanguard of the international revolutionary movement influenced greatly the Central Asian people. The progressive forces in Central Asia developed a sense of affiliation with Russian proletariat against feudal and colonial oppression. Central Asian people could understand the oppressive nature of the capitalist and landlords in Russia and Central Asia and could foresee their fate similar to that of the Russian proletariat. The proletariat of Russia became instrumental in arousing the class-consciousness among the Central Asian masses. Within the fold of these Central Asian masses, the unique feature was the presence of a large
number of Russian peasant settlers, Russian workers, who were the part and parcel of Central Asian life after the merger.

Thus, the interdependence between Russia and Central Asia was enhanced by the distinctive legacy of the Tsarist and Soviet continental empire. Unlike the French or British overseas empires, the Russian empire was a geographically contiguous entity with much stronger demographic, cultural and economic links. The merging of the 'metropole' and 'colonies' in Russia was furthered by a long history of mingling and interaction in Eurasia, in particular between Slavic and Turkic peoples. Sizeable Slav communities settled in Central Asia and the Caucasus, while Russia contained several Turkic Muslim people and a growing Caucasian diaspora. In fact, historical Russia was created by the creeping centuries old migration of Russians to the Middle Volga, the southern Steppes, Siberia and the Far East territories that were dominated by Turkic people, who were the heirs of the previous thirteenth century Eurasian empire of Chingiz Khan. Moreover, similar social conditions in different parts of the Russians/Soviet empire and the active co-option of much of the non-Russian elite in Tsarist and, particularly, Soviet state structures strengthened the cohesiveness of this empire.
In December 1991, the Russians faced a qualitatively different situation. The collapse of the USSR was tantamount to the collapse of the Russian state itself - the Russians did not have any other 'core' nation-state to return to after the break up of the soviet empire. The Russian and Soviet identities were closely interwoven, while the Russian people had hardly any experience of living in a nation-state in either their more recent or distant past. The peculiarities of the Russian/Soviet state complicated the dismantling of the USSR for Russia and Central Asian republics.