

**THE CENTRAL ASIAN
QUESTION FROM AN
EASTERN STAND-POINT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649494040

The Central Asian Question from an Eastern Stand-Point by Anonymous

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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**THE CENTRAL ASIAN
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THE
CENTRAL-ASIAN QUESTION,

FROM

AN EASTERN STAND-POINT.



WILLIAMS AND NORSGATE,
4, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1869.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS paper was printed for private circulation in September last. The word "Private" was printed upon the cover. Some persons to whom it was sent, or others to whom they lent it, seem to have attached more importance to the author's remarks than he did himself, and the result was that the brochure was reviewed by some journals, and otherwise noticed by writers in the public press as the "Blue Pamphlet." Privacy, therefore, being no longer possible, the paper is published at the request of a few who take sufficient interest in Eastern affairs to look below that smooth surface which covers the deep waters of Asiatic politics. With the exception of a few verbal corrections, the paper up to page 73 remains unaltered. Subsequently the review has been brought up to date. The object of this paper is not to criticise in a hostile spirit the acts of a Government of which the writer disapproves—a Government which, under the Governor-Generalship of Earl Canning reached the zenith of dignity—but mainly to endeavour, by holding up a mirror to the Asiatic mind, to reflect the images those acts have produced therein. If any bitterness should be apparent in the manner in which this duty has been performed, it is that bitterness which is inseparable from the feeling that National honour, National character, all that is worth struggling for in the East, has been abandoned and lost.

THE 'Eastern Question' has long been a bugbear in Europe. Many people use the term without understanding its full meaning. Others have been so accustomed to hear it talked of, that, to their minds, it suggests an idea something akin to the cry of "wolf." Yet statesmen, and all men who do understand the serious nature of this question, and the complicated and very alarming difficulties its mismanagement may give rise to, have little doubt regarding its intimate bearing upon the peace, not of Europe alone, but of the World. Let us lift the veil of darkness behind which this skeleton is concealed and examine it a little.

It is in obedience to a natural law that, as amongst animals the stronger devour the weaker, so amongst men, they conquer and subdue each other. Hence, first arose the idea of *Universal Dominion*, which from time immemorial, has swayed the minds and guided the actions of monarchs, and which, if it were permitted to obtain development, would be as strong to-day as it was in the times of Xerxes and Alexander, and in the days of Napoleon Bonaparte. Much is talked, occasionally, of the *Antagonism of Race*: but I do not attach so much importance to this idea as some do. No doubt races differ in

their characteristics, and these differences ought not at all times to be left so far out of sight as they have been by the Saxon when settling his account with the Celt. But in the case under review it is nationalities rather than races we have to deal with, and types of civilization—the European and the Asiatic. The former is represented by one nation of Europe alone, Russia; the latter by the whole of the nations, and tribes of Asia. Russia is the most eastern of the fraternity of nations comprised in the continent of Europe. The civilization of the East and West, or as some would probably put it, the *barbarism* of the East and the *civilization* of the West, meet on her confines. It is not necessary to step aside here to enter into arguments as to whether Eastern civilization and barbarism are synonymous terms. Let it be granted that the civilization of the West is of a more advanced if not of a higher *order* than that of the East; and that its spread can only be viewed as an onward move in the inevitable destiny of the world. That Russia, therefore, should conquer and subdue the Turk, that she should put the sick man out of pain and to death; that she should spread her influence over the vast countries which form the greater part of the continent of Asia, and restore order and good government, if ever they have known them, to the various peoples inhabiting them, *from this point of view*, could not but be a source of unmixed gratification to all the civilized nations of Europe and America.

This position is not likely to be disputed; but were it disputed by all the other nations of Europe, it must be admitted by England, for on this ground she has repeatedly justified her conquest and occupation of India. Some of her most distinguished statesmen even have gone so far as to assert that the acquisition of fresh territory is a position, which it is a moral obligation upon the nation to accept. Looking at the question, therefore, purely as one affecting the interests of civilization, no European nation has a *right* to object to extensions of either the frontiers or the influence of Russia, even though pushed to the extreme limit of the absorption of States and Kingdoms, provided that the nations whose countries are so absorbed, are rude and barbarous, or to use a common though ambiguous phrase, effete and antagonistic to progress. Least of all can England with any show of reason offer any justifiable opposition to the designs of Russia as regards her Oriental neighbours, for were she to do so, a defence of her own Eastern policy would become a matter of some difficulty.

So far then, all that remains for Europe and England to do, is to look on patiently while Russia quietly and steadily pursues that policy of national expansion which has been the guiding principle of her government since the days of Peter the Great.

But at this stage of the discussion another element enters the argument, viz. the "Balance of power." Here all Europe with England is interested, and

on the principle that self-preservation is the first law of nations as of nature, all Europe with England has a right to be interested in restraining Russia or **any other** of the great fraternity of European nationalities from acquiring an accession of territory or a position which shall place it, as it were, beyond the control of any combination of the other great Powers, and thus enable it to menace any or all of them, or otherwise jeopardise the peace of the world. The existence of the term "balance of power" is in itself an acknowledgment of the truth of the argument as far as it has been pushed; and it is solely the influence of this idea which has maintained, and which still operates to maintain, the integrity of the Turkish empire.

As regards Europe, therefore, England has no special cause to fear the designs of Russia upon Constantinople or the Turkish Empire; or, however much more serious the consequences to her, as a great maritime and commercial power, might be, not more, at least, than any other of the nations of Europe; and whilst she is in possession of Gibraltar, which many people seem so anxious to get rid of, not so much as a great many, such for example as those lying along the shores of the Mediterranean. The development of a Russian navy in the Mediterranean it is true might have a special bearing on the question of the preservation of our through route to India and the East; but it is not necessary for me in this paper to discuss this point, or others opened

up by the completion of the Suez Canal, nor further to allude to the Eastern Question in regard to its purely European aspect.

I am fully aware of the apathy with which all questions connected with the British Empire in the East are treated in England. As a rule, they are looked upon as an *ineffable bore*. It requires a massacre, a war, or at least a great scandal, to attract even a small modicum of public attention to any Indian question, though it may involve the welfare and happiness of two hundred millions of Her Majesty's subjects. I am not ignorant, therefore, that in travelling out of Europe, I cut from under my feet my *locus standi* with the British public. I write, however, not for the general public; and I desire to state, that unless the reader, whoever he be, will give very thoughtful and attentive consideration to the whole *argument*, he had much better not proceed with the perusal of these brief remarks.

On passing over into Asia, the aspect of affairs at once undergoes a material change. Being *forced*, as before demonstrated, to admit, that the wave of civilization ought not to be arrested in its Eastward course; it remains to be considered how stands the question on the other ground of argument, the "balance of power."

In the East there is no fraternity of highly civilized nations with whom England can co-operate in imposing constitutional checks upon the advance of Russia into the heart of Asia, or who will join in