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THE GREAT GAME IN KASHGARIA

British and Russian Missions to Yakub Beg

by Paul B. Henze

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The modern history of Sinkiang dates from the Mohammedan rebellion of the 60s and 70s of the last century. This rebellion, affecting several provinces of China proper as well as Chinese Turkestan, severely shook the decaying Manchu Dynasty. Millions of Chinese were massacred, and when the reconquering armies advanced they massacred in revenge until wide territories were laid waste that to the present day have not recovered their population.¹

I. Introduction and Summary:

Some contemporary observers of events in East Turkestan during the late 19th century as well as subsequent writers have treated Yakub Beg primarily as an "adventurer" who gained control of Altishahr² by guile and had no other aim but to wield power.³ In contrast, most of the Europeans who had direct experience of East Turkestan during Yakub Beg's time recognized that his ascendancy owed a great deal to deep historical currents. His power was based on a combination of both ethnic and religious factors which

¹Owen Lattimore, Studies in Frontier History, London, 1962, p. 206.

²"The Six Cities", the traditional name for the settled parts of the Tarim Basin; sometimes also referred to as Djetishahr, "The Seven Cities".

³E.g. Henry Lansdell, Chinese Central Asia, London, 1893, Vol. II, pp. 58-64; Timothy Severin, The Oriental Adventure, Boston, 1976, p. 193; and Jack Chen, The Sinkiang Story, New York, 1977, pp. 148-161.

were little understood at the time and have never been fully studied since. To Britain and Russia, motivated by a mounting sense of rivalry and desiring to protect their imperial interests in Inner Asia, Yakub Beg represented both an opportunity and a danger. Yakub Beg himself sought to manipulate these two European "superpowers" to bolster his position against his primary enemy, the Manchu Empire. For this sorely tested empire Yakub Beg could only be an enemy. A sense of Islamic and Turkic solidarity motivated Yakub Beg to seek the support of the Ottoman Sultan. The response to his overtures to Constantinople was sympathetic but had little practical effect. In the end British assistance proved inadequate while the Russians shifted their support to the Chinese and helped their military forces destroy independent Kashgaria.

This essay focuses on British and Russian actions and interactions as reflected in the missions both countries undertook to East Turkestan in the 1860s and 1870s.

It can only touch on the indigenous factors that determined the outcome of Yakub Beg's bold attempt to set up an independent state in the heart of Asia. I hope, however, to point the way for future research on little studied aspects of the religious and social background of the period.

II. Historical Background:

The first [Ming] emperor acknowledged that China was neither powerful enough to overwhelm the

Mongols, Uigurs and other peoples on the frontier nor wealthy enough to maintain large garrisons outside its borders. The court sought to preserve the territorial integrity of the nearby oases in order to prevent more powerful states from engulfing them.⁴

From very ancient times East Turkestan had been a crossroads of peoples, religions and civilizations.⁵ At the beginning of the Christian era, it was already a route for pilgrims and traders between China and India. Chinese silk and other luxury products reached the Roman and Byzantine Empires across Central Asia via the famous Silk Road later traveled by Marco Polo and other Europeans who visited China.⁶

China's interest in the lands to the north and west was mainly to protect itself from the incursions of the semi-nomadic peoples who lived there but there were periods when Chinese emperors exercised substantial control over parts of the region. The last Sassanian king of Persia sought Chinese aid to repulse the Arabs

⁴Maurice Rossabi, China and Inner Asia from 1368 to the Present Day, New York, 1975, p. 27.

⁵Among the most important accounts of archaeological explorations which revealed major features of the early history of the region are M. Aurel Stein's Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan, London, 1904, and Ruins of Desert Cathay, 2 vols., London, 1912. The latter work was reissued in 1987 by Dover Publications, New York. The reports of Sir Douglas Forsyth, the most important British emissary to Yakub Beg, provided the incentive for serious archaeological exploration during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For an excellent recent account of all the major figures in this effort see Peter Hopkirk, Foreign Devils on the Silk Road, London, 1980.

⁶Jack A. Dabbs, History of the Discovery and Exploration of Chinese Turkestan, The Hague, 1963.

but was refused. In the middle of the 8th century Arab advances brought all of Central Asia into the realm of Islam. Turkic peoples had been settled in the Tarim Basin before the coming of Islam.⁷ During the 9th century Arab geographers began referring to the region as Turkestan. The region retained its Turkic and Islamic character when it fell under Mongol hegemony in the 13th century. For the first and only time in history, the Mongols united all of Inner Asia under a single sovereignty.

By the time of the fall of the Mongols and the rise of the Chinese Ming Dynasty (1344), the Chinese position in Inner Asia was tenuous and soon challenged by Tamerlane. Chinese policy continued unchanged in its essentials for the next three centuries but was less assertive and less successful. Relations between West and East Turkestan were close. The two constituted a single political and cultural world. The Uzbek-dominated Timurid successor states did not feel threatened by Ming China. Goods originating in China moved across Central Asia to the west.

In East Turkestan several centers of local power developed under rulers who called themselves Moghuls (i.e. Mongols) and claimed descent from Chinggis-Khan though they were all Muslim and nearly all Turkic. Alongside them a line of religious-oriented leaders--the Khojas--gained influence. Their founder, Makhtum Azyan,

⁷"The Uigurs" in E. Bretschneider, Medieval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources, London, 1887, Vol. I, pp. 236-263.

came to Kashgar from Bukhara. He claimed descent from the Prophet.⁸ His successors split into two rival groups, the White and Black Mountain Khojas. During the 17th century, the Khojas replaced the Moghuls as the temporal rulers of the city states and principalities of East Turkestan.

The Manchu (Ch'ing) Dynasty which overthrew the Ming in 1644 had to face a new challenge on its Inner Asian frontiers: the advancing Russian Empire. Russian pressure was first felt in the north. It was absent in the west until the 18th century. Meanwhile movement of goods destined for the Middle East and Europe across Central Asia declined but regional trade with China flourished. No great leader arose to unify the Muslim regions. Manchu policy aimed to extend colonial administration into all the areas traditionally claimed by the Chinese Empire, but authority was exercised primarily through established local leaders.

As the Manchus became preoccupied with European penetration of the Chinese coast, the quality of officials and troops assigned to the Inner Asian regions deteriorated. The local population found Manchu overlordship increasingly distasteful and supported indigenous leaders opposing it. Religious resurgence seems to have played an important, but still poorly understood, role in East Turkestani political developments in the 18th century, when

⁸Owen Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, Boston, 1950, pp. 16, 192.

the both Khoja factions lost power and most of them fled westward to the Khanate of Khokand.

III. East Turkestan Before Yakub Beg:

By 1760 China appeared to be at the height of its power in Inner Asia. By 1860, exactly a century later, the Ch'ing [Manchu] system in Inner Asia had crumbled. Russian influence had spread in Central Asia and...the growing European pressure on China exacerbated Ch'ing difficulties.⁹

Turkic Muslims were not alone in their resentment of Manchu rule. Chinese Muslims--Dungans--were in the vanguard of a religious movement called The New Teaching (hsin chiao) which was linked to the Nakshbendi order in West Turkestan and the Middle East. Revolt and civil war erupted in the Dungan areas in the latter half of the 18th century. Manchu authorities' prohibition of New Teaching practices did not deter adherents. For the next century much of Western China was in a state of ferment.

Given the traditionally fragmented political structure of the region, maintenance of Manchu control in East Turkestan might have proved possible if Peking had not had to give first priority to quelling rebellions in intervening territories among ethnic Chinese Muslims. The course of events in Kashgaria was not merely a by-product of the Dungan rebellion in Shensi and Kansu, however. Traditional westward orientation remained strong. Khoja influence in East Turkestan could never be eliminated by

⁹Rossabi, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

the Chinese because the Khojas who fled had a firm base in West Turkestan. The first major rebellion against Manchu rule in East Turkestan broke out in 1763 under Hamidullah Beg and was centered in the town of Uchturfan. When it was suppressed, thousands of East Turkestanis fled to West Turkestan.¹⁰

The Khanate of Khokand had emerged as the most important regional power by the end of the 18th century. Its merchants dominated trade in both directions, to and from China, within East Turkestan and in neighboring regions under Chinese suzerainty. Khokandi merchants had a privileged status in Kashgar and other towns of the Tarim Basin.¹¹ Though our knowledge is inadequate (and Manchu understanding of these ties was probably also deficient), many of these Khokandi merchants, commonly known as Andijanis, were adherents of Nakshbendi tarikats. They were therefore favorably predisposed toward the Khojas. Their influence provided a basis for a series of new attempts by the Khojas to regain control over East Turkestan during the years 1820-1860.

¹⁰Isa Yusuf Alptekin, Dogu Turkistan Davasi, Istanbul, 1981, p. 123.

¹¹Relations between Khokand, on the one hand, and Kashgar and Peking, on the other, were not originally hostile. Before Russian penetration of Turkestan, the Khans of Khokand, in fact, exploited their positive relations with Manchu China to consolidate their position vis-a-vis Bukhara. As the quality of Manchu administration declined and problems of traders became more complicated, and as the Khojas, who enjoyed high status in Khokand, were repeatedly tempted to take advantage of Chinese weaknesses in Kashgaria, they deteriorated. See Morris Rossabi, op. cit., pp. 174-177.

One, Cihangir Khan, harassed the Chinese for eight years, 1820-1828. When he was captured, his brother, Mohammed Yusuf, continued incursions from Khokandi territory and maintained a nine-month siege of the Chinese garrison in Kashgar. Again, in the wake of these events, thousands of East Turkestanis fled westward. In 1846 Mohammed Emin Khoja led another revolt with help from Khokand. He was defeated by Manchu troops and thousands of his supporters fled westward. In 1855 one of the leaders of this revolt, Vali Khan Tore, succeeded in holding Kashgar for almost half a year until Manchu forces drove him out. Once again, thousands of those who had taken his side during the revolt fled to Khokandi and Bukharan territory.¹² Thus large numbers of people living in West Turkestan, refugees and direct descendants of those who had fled in previous decades, maintained ties with East Turkestan which transcended purely commercial interests.

The religious revolts and civil wars which broke out in Western China in the late 1850s proved uncontrollable. The Manchus had been weakened by two decades of intense struggle in the Chinese heartland: the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion.¹³ Dungan leaders, inspired by the New Teaching, openly proclaimed their desire to secure independence from China. Manchu authority

¹²Alptekin, op. cit., pp. 123-125.

¹³Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, Washington, 1944, pp. 764-765.

crumbled. East Turkestan was ready for a Muslim leader who was ready take advantage of Manchu weakness, protect local commercial interests and defend Islam.

IV. Atalyk Gazi, Bedevlet, Amir of Kashgaria:

Yakub Beg was virtually the last truly independent sovereign in Central Asia and perhaps the most outstanding ruler that Asia produced after Nadir Shah. He was competent both as administrator and as soldier and managed to bring peace and security to a country which had known neither for half a century.¹⁴

Information on Yakub Beg's family background, early life and influences which affected his political attitudes is contradictory and incomplete. If the judgment expressed above is excessively positive, other assessments often appear too negative.¹⁵ Sources are all in agreement on his origins: he was born about 1820 in Pishkent near Tashkent. Pishkent was described in 1876 by one of the most conscientious contemporary observers of events in Turkestan as

a thriving little town, chiefly noted for the immorality of its inhabitants and for being the birthplace of Yakub Khan, the Amir of Kashgar, one of whose wives and many of whose relatives still reside there.¹⁶

His father and grandfather are said to have been Muslim judges--

¹⁴Gary Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, 1865-1895, London, 1963, p. 25.

¹⁵E.g. that of Jack Chen, op. cit., pp. 148ff.

¹⁶Eugene Schuyler, Turkistan, Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkestan, Khokand, Bukhara and Kuldja, London, 1876, Vol. I, p. 324.

kazis--and he is said to had a religious education and then gone to seek his fortune at the court in Khokand. He was given command of the fort of Ak-Mescit (now Kyzyl Orda) in 1847 and stubbornly withstood a 26-day Russian siege in 1853. That experience appears to have left him with a strong resentment of the Russian advance into Central Asia but also a good deal of respect for Russian military prowess. He continued a military career in the service of the Khan of Khokand, becoming entangled in the complexities of court politics, and developed an ability to come out on the winning side. In 1863 he became commander of Tashkent but was defeated by a Russian force outside the city in 1864.¹⁷ The discomfort of defeat was, however, short-lived.

In this same year 1864 in the confusion following the collapse of Manchu power in East Turkestan, the Kirgiz chieftain who held power in Kashgar, Sadik Beg, appealed to Khokand to send a descendant of the Khojas to reconcile competing factions and bring peace to the region. The Khan of Khokand sent Buzurg Khan, last surviving son of Cihangir Khan who had enjoyed several years of success in Kashgaria 40 years earlier. Along with him he sent Yakub Beg as military commander with a small contingent of soldiers. His energy and talents for leadership, including adroit diplomacy, intrigue and decisive action against those who

¹⁷This information is derived primarily from the summary of Yakub Beg's early career in the most comprehensive scholarly survey of his activity to appear in recent times: Tsing Yuan, "Yakub Beg (1820-1877) and the Moslem Rebellion in Chinese Turkestan", Central Asiatic Journal, VI/2 (June 1961), pp. 134-167.

refused to cooperate, quickly enabled Yakub Beg to become the dominant personality in Kashgaria.

Buzurg Khan had no talent for leadership, soon came to resent his military commander, Yakub Beg, and encouraged several unsuccessful maneuvers and conspiracies against him. Yakub Beg saw the value of the Khoja tradition and first hesitated to strike about against Buzurg Khan. He eventually imprisoned him at Yangi Hisar for a year and a half. Meanwhile he was busy in campaigns to consolidate control over East Turkestan. He captured Kucha in 1867, Korla in 1869 and Turfan in 1871. Russian occupation of the Ili (Kuldja) region the same year prevented him from adding it to his domains. Confident of his own position, he sent Buzurg Khan into exile in Tibet in 1868 and formally took full power himself. His accomplishments had been substantial:

The confusing situation in early 1865 required that Yakub Beg accomplish at least four tasks: (1) to bring the foreign Moslems and the Kirgiz to his side; (2) to reduce the Manchu garrison of Yangishahr; (3) to clarify his relation[s] with his chief, Buzurg Khan; and (4) to consolidate his control over Kashgaria. If one takes into account ...the meager resources at his disposal, his achievement was truly remarkable.¹⁸

Yakub Beg adopted an old Turkic title Atalyk Gazi--"Guardian Warrior"--and proceeded to organize a highly centralized Islamic state. He favored men who had followed him from West Turkestan

¹⁸Tsing Yuan, loc. cit., pp. 143-144.

(many of these were probably descendants of previous refugees) and tended to be intolerant of local dissent. So much so, in fact, that he

alienated many inhabitants of Sinkiang who might otherwise have supported him. They resented the spying of Yaqub's police force upon their activities. Merchants resented the taxes on their transactions which, together with the disruption of their trade with China, place enormous financial burdens upon them. The peasants, too, loathed the onerous taxes demanded of them, particularly when they observed that much of their money was squandered on court luxuries.¹⁹

Others have judged Yakub Beg's method of governing more favorably. East Turkestanis to this day look back upon his 13-year rule as the only time their country enjoyed independence and was able to maintain relations with other powers.²⁰ Yakub Beg built a governmental structure that gave him effective control over the heart of East Turkestan for the better part of a decade. He soon took the additional title Bedaulat (Bedevlet), "Fortunate One", and was awarded the title Amir-ul-Muminin by the Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz in 1873.

A comprehensive assessment of Yakub Beg's government and of the viability of the independent state he established in the heart of Inner Asia is beyond the scope of this essay. The task may, in fact, be impossible without collection and study of more primary sources. The British in India took an intense interest in Yakub

¹⁹Rossabi, op. cit., p. 178.

²⁰Alptekin, op. cit., p. 129.

Beg. British visitors to his dominions and his court almost invariably became enthusiastic supporters of "Independent Tartary". There was always some skepticism in London. Russians in Central Asia took Yakub Beg seriously and, while displaying less enthusiasm for him as a ruler than British Indian officials, were keenly interested in Kashgaria from at least three points of view: (1) as a complicating and potentially disruptive factor in Russia's efforts to consolidate colonial control over the Khanates of West Turkestan; (2) as a source profitable trade; and (3) as a threat to the Russian advance into Inner Asia should Britain establish a protectorate over the East Turkestani state.

V. British Initiatives toward Independent Tartary:

...Yakub Beg was soon to be regarded by the British as the hero of the hour. His achievements would be compared to those of Ranjit Singh and he would be hailed as the greatest conqueror in Central Asia since Timur and Babur. For a time there was even talk of uniting the Islamic states of Central Asia, stemming the tide of Russian advances and extending his rule as far as the Great Wall. His ambassadors were welcomed in Calcutta...²¹

British commercial and political interest in the countries to the north of India, including Tibet as well as Turkestan, goes back to the beginning of the 19th century. The extensive travels of William Moorcroft, first Englishman to penetrate into Ladakh and the region where the Karakoram and the Hindu-Kush meet, provided the Government of India with valuable information on trade routes

²¹Keay, op. cit., London, 1977, p. 229.

to Turkestan and political conditions in the entire region.²² Moorcroft, who died mysteriously in Afghan Turkestan in 1825, anticipated the geopolitical concerns--above all, fear of Russian advances--which came to dominate British thinking in the latter half of the 19th century. But British Indian officials of his own time, concerned with the immediate problems of consolidating influence in the Punjab and Kashmir, considered him an extravagant visionary.

It is difficult today, when we have accurate pictures of every feature of the globe from the cameras of satellites, to realize how limited geographical knowledge still was in the 19th century. Uncertainties about terrain had a direct effect on politics and international relations. The seas were well known, but the great land masses: the interiors of Asia, Africa and Latin America, were inaccessible mysteries. Empire builders thus gave high priority to exploration and compilation of basic geographical knowledge. One of the outstanding scientific projects of the last century, the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India (GTS), was launched soon after the defeat of Napoleon. In 1855 the GTS began operations in Kashmir, where it faced the formidable task of measuring and charting the jumble of mountain ranges, valleys and plateaus of Inner Asia, the highest and most complex land mass in the world. The interest of British Indian authorities

²²Moorcroft is the subject of a recent definitive biography by Gary Alder, Beyond Bokhara, London, 1985.

was now strategic as well as scientific but there were many differences among officials both in India and in London over priorities for penetration of the mountains and the implications of sending British officials into regions claimed by China, independent or the object of Russian aspirations. At the same time enthusiasm for expanding trade with territories to the north was growing. Fear of Russian commercial competition combined with concern for the security of Britain's Indian Empire and compelled Britain to push into the Himalayas and beyond.

Three Germans, the Schlagintweit brothers, were the first modern Europeans²³ to penetrate into East Turkestan, where they gathered a formidable body of information subsequently published in four volumes.²⁴ One of the brothers was assassinated near Kashgar in unsettled local conditions in 1857. This fact, widely known in India, underscored the dangers of travel in East Turkestan, but heightened the appeal of the area for the adventuresome.

Just as Yakub Beg was beginning to consolidate his control over his new domains, a GTS officer working in Ladakh, William Henry Johnson, set out over the Karakoram toward Yarkand. On his first

²³I omit discussion of an extremely colorful but controversial early Himalayan explorer named Alexander Gardiner, who may have been an American by birth. His memoirs were published in London in 1898, long after his death. For the most recent attempt to sort out what is known of him and his travels, see Keay, op. cit., pp. 107-131.

²⁴H.A. & R.Schlagintweit, Results of a Scientific Mission to India and High Asia, 4 vols., London and Leipzig, 1861-66. _

attempt in 1864 he turned back shortly after he entered Yarkandi territory, but on his second try in 1865 he reached Khotan and was subsequently offered the governorship of Yarkand, where local political anarchy made a large Kashmiri merchant population was eager for British protection. Johnson was deterred by the civil war then raging and did not actually go into Yarkand, but he returned to India enthusiastic about the possibilities of trade with East Turkestan:

...Johnson painted the picture of a populous land, rich in minerals, that had suddenly been deprived of its one, and almost its only, trading partner. The Chinese had gone and with them the market for Khotan's gold, her jade and her skins. Desperately missed too was the compressed tea which had been imported from China; any country able to make good the deficiency was sure of a warm welcome. And who better than British India? ...But the one note of caution that he did sound was a warning more calculated to rouse the authorities in India. In trade, as in politics, Eastern Turkestan stood wide open. And the Russians were already stepping into the vacuum. He suspected that the invaders from Khokand who were now besieging Yarkand were the precursors of direct Russian intervention. He met a Jew in Khotan who admitted to being an agent of the Russian government and he reported that Russian caravans were already regularly penetrating as far as Khotan.²⁵

Johnson seems to have been unaware of the role Yakub Beg was beginning to play. The situation in East Turkestan was, not surprisingly, completely unclear to the Government of India. Viceroy Sir John Lawrence, who held this office between 1863 and 1869, was strongly opposed to permitting British officials to travel beyond India's frontiers to learn more firsthand. Johnson

²⁵Keay, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

was reprimanded for his unauthorized adventure. He left British Indian service and took employment with the Maharajah of Kashmir from where in the 1870s, as governor of Ladakh (1872-1878), he continued to be closely involved in East Turkestani relationships and was a strong advocate of expansion of trade and influence.

The Viceroy and officials in Calcutta continued to be extremely cautious about commercial and political contacts beyond territory under British protection. Some considered the expectations of vastly expanded trade unfounded; some feared overextension of British commitments; a few were fearful of provoking the Russians who were at this time advancing rapidly into the heart of Central Asia. Officials in the Punjab were less squeamish. At a minimum they felt a keen need to know more about what was happening in the countries immediately to the north, for they feared repercussions on the territories for which they were responsible. Yakub Beg sent an emissary to Kashmir in 1866 to discuss improving the security of trade routes. Viceroy Lawrence reluctantly consented to stationing a British trade representative in Leh for a single season. The man chosen, a medical doctor, Henry Cayley, arrived in 1867, but was so effective and so strongly supported by Punjab administrators that he remained through 1869. In 1868 Yakub Beg sent an envoy to Lahore to discuss expansion of trade. He appeared to be seeking a closer British relationship.

As long as Lawrence remained Viceroy, however, a forward British policy toward Yakub Beg was precluded. It is not surprising, therefore that the next British visitors to Independent Tartary had no official status. And though their journeys took place in tandem, and partly together, they had not coordinated their plans in advance at all. Robert Shaw was a young tea planter who had settled in Kangra in the western Himalayas. He was urged to investigate possibilities of trade with East Turkestan by J. Douglas Forsyth, a Punjab commissioner who had developed a keen interest in the region but, as an Indian Government official, could not yet hope to undertake a visit himself. Shaw, 29 at the time, set out from Leh with a caravan of trade goods in September 1868. He had already developed an enthusiasm for people of East Turkestan from the Yarkandi traders he met in Ladakh:

They were tall and dignified and fair as Englishmen. They looked you straight in the face, relished a hearty joke and were above all 'good fellows'.²⁶

Nineteen days out of Leh on the road to Yarkand, Shaw learned that an adventurer named Hayward was on the same trail with the same destination and a few days later the two met. George Hayward was a young lieutenant on leave who had obtained a small grant from the Royal Geographical Society on the recommendation of the famous Sir Henry Rawlinson. A man of "controversial

²⁶Keay. op.cit., pp. 219-220.

character but inexhaustible energy"²⁷, Hayward was traveling disguised as a bearded Pathan with limited baggage and a meager retinue. Shaw feared his thin disguise and eagerness to penetrate into uncharted territory regardless of obstacles would jeopardize his own journey. They parted company--Hayward struck out westward over uncharted passes (hoping eventually to explore the Pamirs) while Shaw proceeded directly to the Yarkandi frontier post at Shahidulla, where he was well received. Hayward, who arrived ten days later, was detained, while Shaw was permitted to proceed to Yarkand. Hayward, however, escaped and set out on a remarkable feat of exploration in mid-winter.

Shaw was as enthusiastic about Independent Tartary as Johnson had been:

It was like an Asiatic Holland, less bare than some of the French provinces and with villages that reminded him of home. In the farmyards cocks crowed and the ducks quacked. Orchards gave way to well tended fields and ditches gushed with water beneath fine trees. The country folk were rosy cheeked and cheerful. Market day brought them thronging to the nearest village and nearly everyone rode a horse or donkey. Compared to India there was no poverty, no beggars and no squalor... Here...was a modern and thriving state, able to supply most of its basic needs yet commercially experienced and traditionally outward looking. It felt a bit like Europe and, as a potential market, it was of European significance.²⁸

Hayward eventually reached Yarkand too and the two men were

²⁷Keay, op. cit., p. 221.

²⁸Keay, op. cit., pp. 226-227.

housed within 100 yards of each other but never met. They were, in effect, prisoners. In January 1869 Shaw was escorted to Kashgar and several weeks later Hayward followed. Shaw had an audience with Yakub Beg soon after he arrived in Kashgar, and was impressed with him. Nevertheless he continued to be kept under 24-hour guard and was not allowed to leave his quarters for three months. He had almost no contact with the local population. Hayward was held under similar circumstances. An Indian, Mirza Shuja, appeared about this time and sought contact with Shaw, who rebuffed him, fearing he was a provocateur. He was actually a native explorer in the employ of the GTS, one of a distinguished group of Indians in disguise--called pundits--who made a major contribution to geographic knowledge during this period.²⁹

After weeks of isolation and refusal to meet his prisoner guests, Yakub Beg unexpectedly released them in April 1869 with apologies for the long delay and promises of commercial cooperation. Though they gained little reliable information about Yakub Beg's parallel dealings with Russian emissaries during this time, Shaw and Hayward probably owed their release to what for Yakub Beg was less than a favorable outcome of his negotiations with the Russians. He wanted unequivocal support against the Chinese. The Russians hesitated. He shifted again to seeking British backing. Shaw took advantage of his final contacts with the

²⁹"Pundit Explorers and the Years 1865-1885" in Kenneth Mason, Abode of Snow, London, 1955, pp. 84-95.

Atalyk Gazi to underscore the power and benevolence of Britain. Shaw and Hayward did not actually meet again until they set out from Yarkand on the road to Leh.

Both Hayward and Shaw, returning to India, argued--exaggeratedly it turned out--that there was real reason to fear a Russian military threat to India because a modern military force could make its way over the Karakoram passes. Their equivocal treatment by Yakub Beg did not dampen their enthusiasm for seeing Britain bolster Kashgaria as an independent buffer state after the pattern of Afghanistan. Yakub Beg himself remained convinced of the value of a closer relationship with Britain and dispatched an envoy to Calcutta in late 1869. By this time Lord Mayo had replaced Lawrence as Viceroy and policy took a 180° turn. A clash between troops of Yakub Beg and Russian forces on the Naryn River provoked alarm in India that Russia would attack Kashgaria and advance up to the Indian frontier, a prospect which every Englishman in India dreaded. While Hayward set out on feverish travels along the far northwestern borders of Kashmir, Shaw undertook what in modern terms we would call a propaganda and lobbying campaign for a closer British relationship with Independent Tartary. Hayward was killed in Yasin in 1870 without having reached the Pamirs.

Lord Mayo prepared for serious overtures and a new mission to Yakub Beg by sending Douglas Forsyth to St. Petersburg to

participate in discussions on Central Asian trade. He was unable to persuade the Russians to abandon their protective tariffs but he contributed to progress on Afghan boundary negotiations then under way. Forsyth returned to India with assurances from the Russians that they would not establish diplomatic relations with Yakub Beg. Next Mayo sent an envoy to Kashmir to get the Maharaja to agree to a new treaty regulating trans-Himalayan trade routes and permitting duty-free transit of goods to and from East Turkestan. Responding to Yakub Beg's request, he agreed to send an official mission to Kashgar in 1870 and chose Forsyth to head it. Shaw accompanied it and it was escorted by Yakub Beg's emissary to the Viceroy, Mirza Mohammed Shadi, as well as Yakub Beg's nephew, Yakub Khan, who was on his way back from a visit to Constantinople and Mecca.

In the terms in which it was conceived, the first Forsyth mission to Kashgar was a failure, as a 5000-word dispatch to the London Times partially conceded a year after its return:

Mr. Forsyth, owing to the strict tenour of his instructions, unavoidably failed in one object of his expedition--that of expressing to the Atalik Ghazee in person the friendly sentiments of the British Government. But he met with an honourable reception from the Atalik's officers, and the fact of such a journey having been made, and with such success, will do much to bring this new kingdom, which may yet have an important part to play in Central Asian politics, into closer political and commercial relations with our Indian Empire.³⁰

Yakub Beg was away campaigning during Forsyth's entire stay in

³⁰"Forsyth's Mission to Yarkund", Times, 31 August 1871.

his domains and there was no direct negotiation with him. He was not yet ready for a comprehensive arrangement with Britain. Whether calculated or not, he could not have resorted to a tactic better designed to heighten British interest. The net effect of the first Forsyth mission was to whet British appetites for a closer ties with independent Kashgaria. The Times' long dispatch, based on Forsyth's official report, begins by declaring the Forsyth expedition a success because:

Thanks to perfect organization and to the tact and courage of the leader and his comrades, the double journey of 2,000 miles between Lahore and Yarkund and back was successfully accomplished in only six months, over the highest tract of country in the world, and, as Mr. Forsyth adds with pardonable pride, without the loss of a single follower or a load of baggage.

The Times explains the circumstances of Yakub Beg's rise to power and his constructive exercise of it:

...the people are prosperous and contented with the severe, but in the main wise and just, rule of their new master. Power has suddenly grown up in a country which lies in a position which may cause it one day to play no inconsiderable part in the Central Asian rivalry of two mighty Empires. It certainly behoves our Indian Government to cultivate political and commercial relations with the Atalik Ghazee and his people; for if they do not, we may be sure the Russian Government will.

Kashgaria was blessed with plentiful food and people leading a good life and eager to offer hospitality to their guests:

Mirza Shadee fed his guests in princely style, on savoury pillaus, delicately seasoned soups, and delicious joints. The Yarkund cooks are perfect artists; they wear neat aprons, keep their kitchens and vessels scrupulously clean, and cook by steam and with good butter... The travellers rode through Karghalik, a country town. The main street was about 15 ft. wide, and in many places covered

over. There were bakers' and butchers' shops, tobacconists' and greengrocers' stalls, a college, a school; and, at the end of the street, a gallows fitted up with pulleys to accommodate two criminals at once. On the roofs of the houses were small gardens of small China asters and balsams. Signs of a progressive, vigorous government were everywhere visible; in the well-kept roads and bridges and the many new canals in the course of construction. The last halt before Yarkund was made at a place called Yungi Bazaar, which a few years back was a desolate swamp. This was drained by the Government, who bestowed it in liberal grants upon agriculturalists... "Thus," adds Mr. Forsyth, "does peaceful industry thrive in Yarkund."

Curiously, however, by the time this report was being read in London, Forsyth and the Viceroy had concluded that not much could be accomplished in Kashgaria in the near future. The Russians, on the other hand, were alarmed by the Forsyth mission as well as by Yakub Beg's continued campaigns in the north. In July 1871 Russian forces occupied Kuldja (Ining) and the Ili valley. Both the Chinese and British feared further Russian advances. Yakub Beg agreed to receive a Russian mission. Lord Mayo was assassinated by a Pathan in February 1872 but his activist frontier policy was continued by his successor, Lord Northbrook.

Passing through India early in 1873 on his way to Constantinople, Yakub Beg's envoy, Yakub Khan, proposed Britain exert itself to secure an agreement with the Russians to preserve Kashgaria as a permanent buffer state. Northbrook endorsed the idea but it met with less enthusiasm in London and St. Petersburg. Northbrook proceeded nevertheless to act on the basis of his own convictions and the advice of men such as Shaw and Forsyth. Another mission

to Kashgaria was authorized and Forsyth, who had recovered his enthusiasm for a renewed effort to cement an alliance with the Atalyk Gazi, was put in charge of it. Shaw, who had written a book on his previous visits³¹ and had been in England publicizing the commercial and political advantages of a deeper British relationship with Independent Tartary, accompanied it and Johnson, now governor of Ladakh, wholeheartedly assisted in preparations for it.

The political sensitivity which had restricted the first Forsyth mission was gone. Four British military officers, infantrymen, cavalrymen and a detachment of crack Indian troops accompanied the expedition along with a platoon of Turks who had been sent from Istanbul to help train Yakub Beg's forces. Earlier that year the Ottoman Sultan had granted him the title of Amir and given permission for the use of his (i.e. the Sultan's) image on Kashgari coinage. The expedition included medical technicians, surveyors, hunters, taxidermists, naturalists and servants of all kinds. It was under instruction not only to negotiate a commercial treaty and arrangements for permanent diplomatic ties with Kashgaria, but to gather all possible topographic, ethnographic and economic information about Yakub Beg's domains.

The party assembled in Srinagar in early September 1873 and

³¹Robert Shaw, Visits to High Tartary, Yarkand and Kashgar, London, 1871.

proceeded to Leh. It consisted of 350 men and 550 animals. Johnson assembled an additional 6,476 porters and 1,621 ponies and yaks to accompany the expedition safely along the route over the Karakoram to Yarkandi outposts during the harsh late autumn weather. The economy of Ladakh is said to have required four years to recover from the strain of supporting this massive venture.³² The mission made a ceremonial entry into Kashgar in December and was received by the Amir in colorful ceremonies. Forsyth laid before him a letter from Queen Victoria in a jeweled gold box and spoke in Persian:

I have the honor to present to Your Highness this letter from Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of Hindustan. Since the Government of Her Majesty is on terms of amity and friendship with all governments of the world, it is hoped that the same relations may be established between the British Government and that of Your Majesty.³³

There was another letter almost as grandly encased from the Viceroy. An enormous quantity of gifts, including working models of various kinds of machines--even a steamboat!--were presented to Yakub Beg and his officers. The sewing machines were most admired. The atmosphere was more cordial than it had been on any previous visit.

With very little difficulty a comprehensive commercial treaty was

³²Keay, op. cit., p. 252.

³³As cited in Keay, op. cit., p. 250.

negotiated and formally signed on 2 February 1874.³⁴ It provided for unrestricted trade with the Indian Empire and the exchange of commercial agents with judicial powers in each other's territory. During their stay in Kashgar, members of the expedition were permitted to move freely about the city and some traveled widely, exploring in the Tien Shan to within 30 miles of Russian outposts. Yakub Beg raised no objections to plans for further exploration in the Pamirs but changed his mind after the expedition returned to Kashmir.

The members of this expedition saw far more of East Turkestan than any previous visitors and gained a better understanding of Yakub Beg's character and the nature of his rule. They recognized that Independent Kashgaria was not France or Italy. Many features of the Amir's style of governing were abhorrent. His soldiery were unimpressive. The Turkish military men faced a challenging task. Without great improvements in organization and arms, the Kashgari military forces would probably be no more effective in resisting a determined Russian assault than those of the Khanates of Western Turkestan. Greater realism did not alter Forsyth's judgment about the importance of a close British relationship with Kashgaria, however. His views were shared by Shaw and others in the expedition.

³⁴The text is given in Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, pp. 324-328.

Lord Northbrook quickly ratified the treaty and approved the assignment of Shaw, accompanied by a medical doctor, as permanent representative of the Government of India in Kashgar. Though his responsibilities were ostensibly purely commercial, his instructions provided for broader political involvement should circumstances prove favorable:

Your duties at Kashgar will be to maintain friendly relations with the Amir's Government, to attend to British commercial interests in His Highness' territory, and generally to supervise the execution of the Treaty and promote its effects. You will refrain from offering suggestions to the Amir in matters of Government or foreign policy; but if he desires to consult you, you need not refuse to assist him with information and appropriate advice.³⁵

Though officials in London still had reservations about both the desirability and feasibility of consolidating close relations with Yakub Beg, Lord Northbrook had high expectations of Shaw's mission in Kashgar. Though warmly welcomed there, Shaw soon encountered difficulties. At the end of the year the Amir informed Shaw that he could not agree to his remaining as permanent representative of the Government of India unless the Ottoman Sultan approved. In June 1875 the Viceroy instructed Shaw to return to India as soon as he had obtained the Amir's ratification of the treaty. Shaw left in July with the ratification--he thought. When the impressively sealed document was opened and translated in Calcutta, it proved to be only a letter of greeting to the Viceroy. Yakub Beg was merely playing

³⁵As cited from official archives by Alder in British India's Northern Frontier, p. 51.

out a new phase of his elaborate double game.

A Central Asian Trading Company was formed and sent a large caravan to Yarkand in 1874. The value of trade reached a peak in 1876 and then declined. Trade over the Karakoram route never came close to meeting the hopes of early British enthusiasts.³⁶ Worries persisted, however, that Kashgaria, under Russian control, could be developed into a supply base to support further Russian advances in Inner Asia.

The arrival in India of Lord Lytton, who replaced Northbrook as Viceroy in 1876, coincided with a sharp worsening of British-Russian relations in Europe where Balkan tensions were mounting toward the outbreak of a new Russo-Turkish war. Fears of a Russian advance in Central Asia were fed by new geographical knowledge which the second Forsyth expedition had brought back: the passes west of the Karakoram route were found to be much less formidable than had been assumed. Lord Lytton advised London:

We may find it in our power to establish commercial intercourse with Yarkand susceptible of rapid development, and to throw a military force into the country, in case of need, almost sooner than Russia could do so. In that case, I cannot but think that the present opportunity of closer intercourse with the Ruler of Yarkand and his people may be advantageously re-considered from a much more hopeful point of view; and our relations with this State suffered to assume a more important place in

³⁶Trade statistics for the years 1863-1932 are provided in Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, pp. 318-319.

the general programme of our frontier policy.³⁷

London, too, favored another try at placing a permanent representative in Yarkand and Robert Shaw was again chosen. He had meanwhile returned to England and was unable to depart before July 1877. By this time the Near Eastern crisis was at its height and there were even rumors that Imperial Germany was going to intervene in Inner Asia in behalf of the Chinese. Shaw's departure was delayed, for news reached India of Yakub Beg's death at Korla in May 1877 soon after the Chinese had captured Turfan. Though the Chinese continued to advance during the summer and fall of the year, word was still reaching Ladakh at the end of the year that his son and successor, Beykulu Beg, was in charge and desired to pursue relations with Britain. Several weeks after the Chinese General Tso Tsung-t'ang's forces entered Kashgar on 18 December 1877, word finally reached India that Yakub Beg's kingdom had collapsed. The British press, concerned with events in the Balkans and Near East, hardly noticed.

The Great Game and the mutual British-Russian suspicions that sustained it were by no means at an end, but dreams and illusions about independent Kashgaria were finished. Lord Lytton sensibly outlined the policy which Britain was henceforth to follow:

The line which we may adopt as defining the sphere of our political influence should coincide

³⁷As cited in Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 59.

generally with the geographical outline of the position which, if need be, we may be ready to maintain actively.³⁸

VI. Russian Relations with Yakub Beg:

The transformation of Kashgar into a state independent of China under a Russian protectorate would render a great service for its people for whom the Sino-Manchurian tyranny has become insupportable... We shall make ourselves master of Central Asia and we shall be able to hold all the khans in respect, which will facilitate our march forward. - General Gasfort, Governor-General of Western Siberia, 1857.³⁹

One of the first Russian political agents to visit Kashgar was Captain Valikhanov, adjutant of the Governor-General of Western Siberia, who went disguised as a merchant in 1858. He returned convinced that Russian commerce would have free play south of the Tien Shan because of the "insuperable physical obstacles which cut India off to the south."⁴⁰ Though Russian goods had been available in East Turkestani markets for decades, they came via West Turkestani middlemen. There was no direct penetration by Russian traders. Yakub Beg's direct experience of the Russians in his home territory left him deeply suspicious of their motives. He feared that his own as yet unconsolidated position might tempt them to continue their advance into the regions he ruled. So initially he forbade direct trade. He was ready to

³⁸As cited in Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 67.

³⁹Nicholas Vakar, "The Annexation of Chinese Turkestan", Slavonic Review, 1935/36, p. 119, as cited in Lattimore, Pivot of Asia, p. 28.

⁴⁰Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, pp. 34-35.

modify this position as he became more confident of his power and aware of the advantages to be gained by increasing the mutual suspicions of the major powers.

A Russian merchant named Khlyudov chose an opportune time to attempt to set up direct trade relations in 1868. He may have had official encouragement. He organized a trading caravan, set out from Verny (Alma-Ata) and crossed the border into Kashgaria, but was stopped not far beyond. He sent presents ahead to Yakub Beg. He was then permitted to come to see him and proposed a trade agreement. Subsequently Yakub Beg sent his nephew Shadi Mirza back with Khlyudov to open negotiations with the Russians. General Kaufmann, the senior Russian commander in Turkestan, was away on a trip to St. Petersburg so the letter Shadi Mirza carried from Yakub Beg was delivered to the Russian commander in Verny, General Kolpakovsky. The letter expresses the Atalyk Gazi's desire for a broader relationship:

The land of the Great Tsar is great and broad and full of all sorts of wise men [and artisans]... Our land in comparison to yours is a poor ruin. Now, after the destruction of the Chinese power, during six years all has been destroyed that was good and that which commerce had created, so that nothing remains of it at all. This was the reason why your rich merchants were not allowed here, for they could find nothing here but ruins.⁴¹

Kolpakovsky was not prepared to enter into broad negotiations but agreed to some arrangements for exchanging prisoners and sent an aide, Captain Reinthal, to Kashgar to pursue the discussions

⁴¹As cited in Schuyler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 318.

while Shadi Mirza remained in Russian territory. Both sides were edgy. Reinthal's mission was essentially a reconnaissance. No agreement was reached. On his return to Verny, General Kaufmann, still in St. Petersburg, asked Shadi Mirza to come there, which he did, returning to Kashgar in January 1869.

Yakub Beg was upset by Russian construction of a fort on the Naryn River and feared Russia would exploit some disagreement over trade as a pretext to send troops to occupy more of his territory. He addressed a letter to General Kaufmann in April urging a clear delineation of the boundary:

For the passage of caravans and merchants, quiet and safety are needed; and for this it is necessary to fix a boundary, so that merchants may come either from Russia or from other nations.⁴²

These exchanges brought no clear result. Yakub Beg attempted to strengthen his position vis-a-vis the Russians by consolidating relations with the Muslim Dungans and Taranchis⁴³ beyond the northern limits of his territory, but when these efforts failed, he launched military operations against them. Unsettled conditions in the region gave the Russians a motive for occupying the Ili (Kuldja) valley in 1871, as has already been noted. Yakub Beg's fears prompted him to send an emissary, Akhrar Khan,

⁴²Schuyler, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 318.

⁴³The Taranchis are descendants of Uigurs brought from the south into the Ili region in the late 18th century as part of an effort to repopulate the Djungarian Basin after the severe population losses which accompanied Manchu "pacification" of the region.

to Calcutta to confer with the Government of India.

General Kaufmann became frustrated and tried to persuade the ruler of Khokand, Khudayar Khan, to assert his status as Yakub Beg's suzerain, expel him and add Kashgaria to his own khanate. Khudayar Khan, no doubt recognizing that he lacked the power to carry it through, was unwilling to lend himself to the scheme but agreed to act as mediator, so he sent an emissary, Sarymsak Udaychi, to Yakub Beg with a message urging him to settle his differences with the Russians. He reminded the Atalyk Gazi that they could easily overthrow him. Yakub Beg was disinclined to bargain, at least through the intermediary of Khokand. He told Sarymsak Udaychi:

The Russians have come here to look at these localities and become acquainted with the state of the country, and therefore it is better to forbid their coming, for they are a restless and crooked-minded people.⁴⁴

Meanwhile a messenger had left Khokand with a letter from General Kaufmann which detailed Yakub Beg's unfriendly responses to Russia's overtures and advised him to mend his ways, following the example of the rulers of Khokand and Bokhara, as the only way of avoiding severe punishment. General Kaufmann had decided on war against Kashgaria if necessary, but Yakub Beg left the way open for a different course in his reply to the general's threat:

[Your] last envoy... was not a Russian not because there were no Russians to send but because you seemed to think Khokand and Bokhara only worthy of

⁴⁴As cited in Schuyler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 320.

this honor. If the Russians believed in my good wishes, they would send me one of their men... Send me some Russian or even a Tashkent Sart, though he be only a shepherd, and I will send back...an envoy of my own.⁴⁵

General Kaufmann's response was to dispatch a mission headed by Baron Kaulbars which included an engineer, a topographer and a merchant, Kolesnikov. At the same time Kaufmann stationed troops along the route to Fort Naryn, brought up reinforcements and built a new road into the border mountains to facilitate military action against Yakub Beg if the mission did not achieve its aims. The Atalyk Gazi was not easily intimidated. He received the Kaulbars mission warmly but refused to conclude a treaty until the Russians halted their military preparations. They did so and negotiations began in earnest. A document entitled "Conditions of Free Trade Proposed by General Kaufmann to Yaqub Beg, Chief of Djety-Shahr" was signed on 22 June 1872.⁴⁶

Baron Kaulbars dated it 2 June, St. Constantine's Day, and wrote to Kaufmann that as a mark of special good will Yakub Beg had insisted on signing it on the day of his (Kaufmann's) patron saint. Kaufmann carried the deception a step further by sending a dispatch to St. Petersburg which advised that "out of special regard for the Emperor of Russia, the Amir signed the treaty on

⁴⁵Schuyler, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 321.

⁴⁶The text of this agreement is given in Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 323.

the saint's day of the Grand Duke Constantine, the Emperor's brother."⁴⁷ The impression of warm good will proved illusory.

The agreement did not constitute Russian diplomatic recognition of independent Kashgaria. It dealt only with commercial matters. It provided that Russian merchants could establish caravanserais for their exclusive use in all towns in Yakub Beg's domains and provision was made for assignment of commercial agents to deal with matters of customs and movement of goods. These arrangements were to be reciprocal, but this provision was of little significance because East Turkestani merchants were not sending trading caravans to Russian Turkestan. The term used for commercial agents was kervanbashi which the Russians later chose to interpret as consul, though this is clearly not what the term meant to Yakub Beg. As the Russian mission prepared to return, Yakub Beg told them he was pleased they had recognized him as an independent ruler and asked permission to send an envoy to St. Petersburg. Mullah Tarap Khoja was sent in the summer of 1873.

But actually little had changed in Kashgar-Russian relations and soon new difficulties developed. When a Russian merchant named Pupyshev sent a caravan to Kashgar the next year in charge of a clerk named Somov, the caravan was not permitted to proceed beyond the caravanserai in Kashgar. Yakub Beg bought the greater part of his goods but delayed payment for two months and then

⁴⁷Schuyler, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 321-322.

paid Somov in Chinese coins at an unfavorable exchange rate. When Somov returned to Tashkent, he claimed a loss of 15,000 rubles in addition to customs duties. In the ensuing controversy Yakub Beg denied he had bought any of the goods. A joint commission was agreed on and determined that 12,000 rubles were owed, which Yakub Beg paid the next year. Yakub Beg was meanwhile busy receiving the second Forsyth mission, which in size and scope far outshone that of Kaulbars. The Russians, though nearer, now seemed less of a direct threat, for he had also received the title of Amir from the Ottoman sultan and had declared himself his vassal. Russian relations with the Ottoman Empire were steadily worsening during this period.

In spite of Somov's problems the prospect of regular trade with Kashgaria remained enticing for the Russians and another merchant, Morozov, made his way with a large caravan to Kashgar in 1874. His party sold 25,000 rubles worth of goods successfully, stayed 70 days and was permitted to move about freely. There was still, however, no agreement on assignment of a commercial agent/consul to Kashgar and Forsyth's mission had fed Russian fears that Britain was preparing to take Yakub Beg under its direct protection. The Russian ambassador in Constantinople reported, presumably from Turkish sources, that Forsyth's aim was to send "pensioned officers of the Indian Army to be employed as engineers, telegraphists, chiefs of police and

even governors of provinces" in Kashgaria.⁴⁸

In the spring of 1875 an incident involving a lady named Satara Pacha, a relative of Yakub Beg, who was returning to Kashgar from Constantinople through Russian territory, aggravated relations. She was arrested and held in Verny and all her papers and possessions were confiscated.

In the summer of 1875 Kaufmann dispatched the same (now colonel) Reinthal who had gone in 1868 to take gifts to Yakub Beg to Kashgar to try to settle the issue of a commercial representative and, if possible, arrange his own acceptance in this position. This was undoubtedly also a political reconnaissance mission, for Kaufmann had by this time decided that the best way to deal with Yakub Beg would be to mount a military expedition against him. Would the British, however, come to his defense? This danger was a much greater worry than in West Turkestan, where Afghanistan separated areas into which the British and Russians were penetrating. Reinthal was not successful, for Yakub Beg, who had his own network of informants in Russian Central Asia, saw him clearly as a political agent. Reinthal reported back to Tashkent that the Amir's sympathies were entirely with the English. He described how British arms were flowing in to improve the

⁴⁸Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 53.

capabilities of his armed forces.⁴⁹

Shaw, who was about to return to India with a hard-won 'ratification' of Forsyth's treaty that turned out to be nothing more than a polite letter from Yakub Beg to the Viceroy, was still optimistic that Yakub Beg could be firmly linked to Britain. It was increasingly typical of the atmosphere of the times that both the British and Russians repeatedly exaggerated ideas of each other's intentions and the degree of success achieved.

In West Turkestan the Russians were having difficulties with the still nominally independent Khanate of Khokand and suspected Yakub Beg had a hand in them. He, in turn, suspected the Russians of conspiring against him through Khokand. Both were right, for, as among the British, there were substantial differences among Russians on how to deal with Yakub Beg's independent kingdom and colonial officials often acted with a good deal of independence of London and St. Petersburg. The astute American diplomatic observer, Eugene Schuyler, who had

⁴⁹Alder, who has researched these questions more thoroughly than any other modern scholar, concludes that sizable quantities of arms were reaching Yakub Beg with the official knowledge of the Indian Government, though they were never supplied directly. If as many as "20,000 muskets" or "200 cases of guns destined for Yarkand", as mentioned in various reports, were finding their way across India to Kashgaria, substantial funds had to have been provided from somewhere to cover both the cost of the weaponry and the transport. The undertaking was what in modern terms would be described as a thinly disguised covert action. See Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 54-55.

served 10 years in Russia and managed to spend a good deal of his time in Central Asia during the years 1873-75, summed up Russian attitudes at the time of his departure:

During the last few years the idea has obtained some currency in Russia that it would be well to aid the Chinese to re-occupy Kashgar, or even to conquer it...and hand it over to the Chinese. It is thought that it would be far more advantageous to have as a neighbour the Chinese Government, which acknowledges treaty obligations and with which negotiations are more easily managed, than the small Uzbek principality under Yakub [Beg]. Persons who think that believe also that Russia should not extend her frontiers beyond the Tian Shan, which forms a natural and excellent boundary. Against this opinion some objections have been raised, chiefly on the ground that for many reasons it would be impolitic to introduce Chinese rule again into that region. When Kashgar is taken, therefore, unless there be a strong Chinese army in the immediately neighbourhood, it will probably remain in Russian hands.⁵⁰

Things were not going to work out so simply as Schuyler assumed. The projected Russian campaign against Kashgar turned into a war against Khokand in the course of which that Khanate lost its independence and was incorporated directly into Russian Turkestan as the district of Fergana.⁵¹ Yakub Beg found it impolitic to

⁵⁰Schuyler, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 325-326. Schuyler was next assigned as consul-general and secretary of the American Legation in Constantinople, where he played a major role in political developments relating to Bulgaria during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. See James A. Field, Jr., America and the Mediterranean World, 1776-1882, Princeton, 1969, pp. 365ff.

⁵¹General Kaufmann's plan for advancing against Kashgar required dispatch of part of his expeditionary force across the territory of Khokand. In the course of attempting to effect this operation, Russian forces became embroiled in internal troubles in this khanate. The sequence of events is too complicated to recount here. The result was the collapse of native power in

come to the aid of any of the factions in Khokand. He had to give priority to a new threat from the northeast. The Manchu Dynasty was gaining ground against the rebellious Dungans and its forces were approaching Kashgaria.

All the players in the Great Game were mindful of distant events that affected their moves in Inner Asia. By the summer of 1876 Russia was moving toward a new war with the Ottoman Empire. Britain's traditional partiality for the Turkish Sultans--as well as Ottoman support for Yakub Beg--justified Russian skepticism that any deal with Yakub Beg would hold. A chancy arrangement with an independent Muslim ruler in Kashgaria was less attractive to Russia than the lesser evil of a return of firm Chinese control over the area. The Russians had good reason to fear that Turkey would encourage the Muslims of Russia's newly conquered territories in West Turkestan as well as Yakub Beg to rise and that Britain would abet such efforts. Russian commanders in Central Asia had enough intelligence to convince themselves that Britain had laid the groundwork for such an eventuality with shipments of arms to Kashgaria while Turkish military advisers worked to improve the effectiveness of Yakub Beg's forces. The Russians began to reinsure themselves from 1875 onward by selling grain to the Chinese forces advancing toward Kashgar from the north.

Khokand. Schuyler recounts these events in detail. See op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 280-302.

Yakub Beg was simultaneously reinsuring himself. He sent an emissary to Tashkent to congratulate the Russians on the conquest of Khokand and the Russians returned the honor by dispatching Captain Kuropatkin to Kashgar to inform the Amir of the manner in which Russia was reinforcing the mountain passes west of Kashgar to which it had gained direct access by absorbing the territory of Khokand. At the same time the Amir sent his nephew, Yakub Khan, to Calcutta to reassure himself of the Viceroy's support.

VII. Yakub Beg and the Ottoman Empire:

Both Britain and Russia had Muslim subjects in Asia whose reactions to any pro- or anti-Turkish policy had to be considered by both Powers. In the period before the Russo-Turkish War there was plenty of evidence that the Sultan was trying to raise a Muslim league against Russia in Central Asia--and it was designed to include Kashgar. British and Russian theorists frequently regarded intrigue among the Muslims as a legitimate weapon in any struggle between them for hegemony in Asia. It seemed certain that Yaqub Beg would have played an important part if this situation had ever arisen.⁵²

Yakub Beg's links with, and expectations of, the Ottoman Empire are more difficult to describe than his relations with Britain and Russia because less is known about them.⁵³ Given the long tradition of mutual interest between the Turks and other Muslims of Central Asia and the Ottomans, the future Atalyk Gazi no doubt arrived in East Turkestan with basically favorable attitudes

⁵²Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, pp. 61-62.

⁵³Professor Mehmet Saray, in his presentation to the conference for which this essay has been prepared, will no doubt extend our knowledge of this subject on the basis of his recent research. So, probably, will other participants in the sessions.

toward the Ottoman Sultan. Such attitudes probably reflected both shared Islamic faith and a perception of common Turkic cultural background. It is difficult to separate one from the other. Yakub Beg was certainly aware of the great distance and perhaps the weakness of the Ottoman state. Nevertheless, he placed a high value on legitimation by the Sultan-Caliph. From the time he consolidated his control over Kashgaria, he began to send envoys to Constantinople. There was pilgrim traffic to Mecca, then still an integral part of the Ottoman domains, and communities of Turkestani dervishes had long been resident in the Ottoman capital.

The Ottomans were deeply disturbed by Russian advances against the native khanates in Turkestan, for they came quickly after the collapse of the great struggle of the Caucasian Mountaineers under Shamil and the end of the resistance of the Circassians along the eastern Black Sea littoral. More than a million Caucasian refugees fled to Ottoman territory and were resettled in all parts of the empire. Many Caucasian officers entered Ottoman military service. The most serious interaction between the Ottoman and Russian empires during this period developed in the Balkans, but frustrations and setbacks there heightened the desire of some Ottoman statesmen to cause the Russians difficulty farther east if opportunities presented themselves and in this they were encouraged by exiles who had fled the Caucasus and,

earlier, the Crimea. In his timing, Yakub Beg was fortunate.⁵⁴ Whether he had genuine expectations of large-scale aid from the Ottoman Empire we cannot be sure. He made the most of what he could obtain.

Yakub Beg sent an emissary to Sultan Abdulaziz in 1870 to confirm his fealty to him. He asked for military aid and instructors to make his army more effective. The Sultan sent a quantity of weapons and a military mission consisting of infantry, cavalry and artillery instructors under Colonel Kazim Bey. Among its members were officers of Circassian and Dagestani origin. At the same time the Egyptian Khedive Ismail dispatched a mission with rifles and guns. The Atalyk Gazi hoped at this time to build up a modern army of 80,000 men.⁵⁵ There was only one route by which men and military assistance from the Ottoman Empire could reach Yakub Beg: through India. British Indian officials were not only informed of such aid, but had to facilitate its passage through Indian territory.

The high point in Yakub Beg's relations with the Ottoman Empire came in 1873 when Sultan Abdulaziz confirmed his status as an independent ruler under Ottoman suzerainty and sent his envoy, Said Mohammed Yakub, back to Kashgar with authorization for use

⁵⁴Roderic H. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876, Princeton, 1963, pp. 272-275.

⁵⁵Alptekin, op. cit., p. 126.

of his effigy and Yakub Beg's title, Amir-ul-Muminin--"Commander of the Faithful", on Kashgari coins. The Amir flew the Ottoman flag beside his own.⁵⁶ There was frequent dispatch of envoys to Constantinople and additional military advisers and shipments of arms during the period when Russo-Turkish relations were heading toward a new outbreak of hostilities. Said Mohammed Yakub, e.g., was welcomed again in Istanbul in 1875 and returned with 2,000 rifles and six field guns.⁵⁷ After Yakub Beg's death, his heir, Beykulu Beg, sent an emissary to Constantinople in the summer of 1877 to be present at the investiture of Abdulhamid II.

A document from the Ottoman archives has recently been published in which Beykulu Beg summed up for the Sultan in 1882 the manner in which the Chinese reasserted their authority in Kashgaria.⁵⁸ There must be a great deal of additional information on relations with Kashgaria in Ottoman archives.

VIII. The Resurgence of China:

...Tso Tsung-t'ang...argued that the recovery of Sinkiang was necessary for the retention of Mongolia which in turn was essential for the safety of Peking. Unless all strategic points in Sinkiang were held by China, the Mohammedan rulers of that area would sooner or later have to yield either to Russia or to Britain.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Alder, British India's Northern Frontier, p. 62.

⁵⁷Davison, op. cit., pp. 273-274.

⁵⁸Kasgar Islam Devleti Nasil Parcalandi?", Dogu Turkistan'in Sesi, Istanbul, #4/1 (December 1984), pp. 50-52.

⁵⁹Hummel, op. cit., p. 765.

The story of Yakub Beg is a striking example of the unique role a dominant personality can play in history. The same is true of his downfall. His nemesis was a remarkable Chinese general, Tso Tsung-t'ang, who lived from 1812 to 1885. There is even a certain degree of parallelism in the lives of the two men, for Tso came from a Hunan family of modest means but with a scholarly tradition. He was nearly 50 before his abilities as a soldier became apparent. Distinguished service in the struggle to suppress the Taiping rebels and an outstanding record as an administrator of reconquered territories led to his appointment as governor-general of Shensi and Kansu in 1866. Here it was hoped he would be equally successful in repressing the Dungan rebellion. He was delayed for two years, however, by operations against the Nien-fei rebels who were terrorizing much of north China. Only at the end of 1868 was Tso able to go to Sian, capital of Shensi, and begin his campaign to suppress the rebellious Muslims of the northwest.

During the next four years he steadily extended Manchu authority through Shensi into Kansu. Rebel leader Ma Hua-lung was executed in early 1871. Tso made a sharp distinction between the New Teaching, which was strictly proscribed, and conventional Islam, which was treated with tolerance. His aim was to convince the Muslim population of the advantages of orderly life under Chinese administration. Some were resettled and Chinese were settled among them. Tso put as much thought and effort into reorganizing

the recaptured territories, laying the basis for resumption of agriculture, crafts and trade, as he did to pursuit and punishment of rebels. The Manchu authorities in Peking were elated at Tso's successes, promoted him to the rank of Grand Secretary in the Imperial Service and placed him in charge of all military affairs in the northwest. But Muslim resistance was not easily overcome. Rebel leaders withdrew their forces westward. Requirements for food and money to sustain his forces became more difficult to meet as Tso advanced westward toward Djungaria and the Tarim Basin.

The opportunity now arose for the Russians to make an important contribution to the Chinese advance. Russian action may initially have been more accidental--motivated by commercial considerations--than strategic. A Russian merchant named Sosnovsky came to Lanchow in June 1875 and contracted to supply with Siberian grain. In the year that followed the Russians delivered more than 2500 tons of grain which sustained Tso's forces. Tso had continual difficulty getting the money he needed both for his military operations and restoration of economic life in the reconquered territories. Funds were eventually raised with the assistance of foreign banks in Shanghai.⁶⁰

If Yakub Beg had been able to establish an alliance with the Dungan rebels who withdrew westward as Tso advanced, the Manchu

⁶⁰Hummel, op. cit., p. 765

counteroffensive would have encountered far great difficulties. The Dungans were far from unified themselves. Yakub Beg's forces became increasingly embroiled in fighting with and among various factions. Tso was thus able to concentrate first on one rebel group and then another. In late 1876 Tso began his campaign to subdue Turkestan. He captured Urumchi. Yakub Beg sent an emissary to appeal for British mediation. The British ambassador in Peking proposed that the Chinese accept Yakub Beg's submission and permit him to retain his kingdom under Chinese suzerainty. Tso, confident of his ability to advance further, rejected the proposal. Yakub Beg was a domestic problem for the Manchu Empire, he maintained; if Britain wanted a buffer state in Inner Asia, she was free to create one from her own territory.⁶¹

Tso continued his advance into the Tarim Basin in the spring of 1877. When Turfan fell in mid-May, Yakub Beg's independent East Turkestani state suffered a death blow. So did Yakub Beg, though the exact circumstances of his death have never been clarified. He is variously reported to have died in an altercation with aides, to have been poisoned or to have poisoned himself. Lansdell, traveling in the region in the early 1890s, reported three versions of the Atalyk Gazi's demise, including one by an officer (Yuzbashi) who professed to have been present at the time:

[Messengers] brought to Yakub Khan a letter from

⁶¹Rossabi, op. cit., pp. 184-187; Hummel, op. cit., p. 766.

the Chinese in which they asked him why he resisted when his own people were against him and were inviting the Chinese back. As proof they enclosed the signatures of 272 Turkis of position who had written to them. Yakub Khan then flew into a passion, killed one of the messengers, wounded the mullah who had read the letter, and then immediately took poison and died.⁶²

Tso's forces took Aksu in October and Kashgar itself in December 1877. By early 1878 Chinese control had been restored in practically all of East Turkestan. Preoccupied with the Russo-Turkish War in the Balkans and Near East, Britain took surprisingly little notice of these momentous developments which constituted a decisive defeat for British Indian officials who had advocated an Inner Asian policy centered on maintenance of Yakub Beg's independent East Turkestani state.

Russia was now committed to return Kuldja (the Ili region) to China but the Russians found it impossible resist the temptation to advance their strategic interests at China's expense. A Chinese envoy who was ignorant of Central Asian geography was dispatched to St. Petersburg to negotiate a settlement. The result was the Treaty of Livadia signed in early 1879 which confirmed the return of Kuldja but gave the Russians possession of several strategic passes and valleys. It led to a situation similar to that brought about by the Treaty of San Stefano the previous year which provoked an international crisis and Russia had to accept revision of the treaty at the Congress of Berlin.

⁶²Lansdell, op. cit., Vol II, p. 62.

The Ili crisis lasted longer. Peking repudiated its envoy's treaty and appointed a new negotiator in early 1880. Tso Tsung-t'ang positioned his forces for action against the Russians, establishing his headquarters at Hami. The Russians abandoned their territorial demands and the Treaty of St. Petersburg was concluded in February 1881. Tso returned to Peking as a hero the day the treaty was signed. The reconquered territories and the recovered Ili region were formed into the province of Sinkiang--the New Dominion--in 1884.

A German observer of the events of the 1860s and 1870s in Inner Asia had already concluded in 1879 that

one can regard the drama at the eastern end of the Islamic world as finished. In the southern valleys of the Tien Shan the Chinese rather than either the English or the Russians will henceforth rule. The difference is only that while the influence of the British is thus destroyed, Russia stands in good stead with the government in Peking. All of the efforts of the British Indian statesmen have come to nought and the Englishman James Routledge correctly observes that the British actually have nothing to seek in this region: "It concerns Russia alone. She oversees events and at the appropriate time will make her influence felt for her own purposes." Thus the collapse of the Muslim Empire in East Turkestan is in all respects a victory for Russia against the British great power position in Asia and especially in India.⁶³

⁶³Friedrich Hellwald, Centralasien, Leipzig, 1879, p. 206. Many Englishmen saw the outcome of this phase of the Great Game as less catastrophic and many still do. Alder, e.g., maintains that "the situation was not...entirely to India's disadvantage. China on her Asian frontier had not shown herself an aggressive power, and even if there was a danger of Chinese interference with the Muslim Hunza chief, as some argued, the risk of hostile intrigues by the Ataliq among his co-religionists there had been theoretically even greater... There had always been the

possibility of a rupture between India and the Kashgar kingdom, especially since the Ataliq's fear of Russia was said to be so great that he considered declaring himself to be her 'tributary'... In terms of material strength, China constituted a much more effective barrier against Russian expansion than the Muslim kingdom..."; British India's Northern Frontier, p. 75.