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ALIMJANOV, Bakhtiyor Abdikhakimovich  
'ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN TURKESTAN  
GENERAL-GOVERNORSHIP  
(SECOND HALF OF XIX-BEGINNING OF XX CENTURIES).

АЛИМДЖАНОВ, Бахтиёр Абдихакимович  
'ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ ПОЛИТИКА РОССИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ В  
ТУРКЕСТАНСКОМ ГЕНЕРАЛ-ГУБЕРНАТОРСТВЕ  
(ВТОРАЯ ПОЛОВИНА XIX-НАЧАЛО XX ВВ.)'

**External Examiner's Report**

This thesis covers a topic of enormous importance in both Central Asian and Russian imperial history, and one that has been consistently neglected in the 25 years since the Soviet collapse. In the ongoing debate over the colonial nature of Russian rule in Central Asia before 1917 there has been extensive work in cultural, political and institutional history, but the economic side has largely been ignored, especially in Anglophone scholarship, despite its importance for establishing whether or not Russian rule was economically exploitative. This thesis is a welcome attempt to redress that balance. It is based on research in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) and the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in contemporary publications and periodical literature, and in considerable reading in both Anglophone and Russophone historiography. It focuses primarily on the rhetoric of economic development in Colonial Turkestan, arguing that the *appearance* and discourse of modernisation was considerably more important than any practical measures undertaken by the Russian empire to develop the region, and that this was in large part intended for external consumption, to demonstrate that Russia too was a modern European colonial power. The thesis shows considerable promise, but I will not be willing to pass it until substantial corrections have been made. I should note that I have read the version in Russian, as that in English is not very well translated and many points are unclear.

The first point which is not quite clear to me is whether the thesis should be read as a qualification for an old-style *Kandidat Nauk* degree (the term used in Russian) or as a Ph.D. (the term used in English is Doctor of Philosophy). At approximately 185 pages, or 60,000 words, it would meet the standards for the former, but **not** for the latter – a Ph.D. thesis in Europe or America is typically 100,000 words or more, and contain a greater depth of

research and greater sophistication of analysis. The form of the thesis – with carefully-demarcated sections on the historiography of different periods, the originality of the work and so on – is certainly more reminiscent of a *Kandidat Nauk* degree, and judged by those standards I believe it can pass, subject to the corrections I have requested.

### **General Comments**

I understand that Alimjanov's primary interest lies in what we might call the economic ideology or rhetoric of Russian imperial officials, and how this translated into particular policies or laws, rather than diving into the raw statistical data to try to establish more fundamental questions such as the terms of trade that existed between Turkestan and Imperial Russia, or who were the real beneficiaries of the Cotton Boom. Nevertheless, he frequently seems to be passing judgement on these latter questions, referring to the benefits an ill-defined metropolitan bourgeoisie derived from Russian policies in Turkestan in a manner highly reminiscent of Soviet historiography. As it stands there are only two statistical tables in the thesis, both simply reproductions of colonial statistics on land-ownership which are being used to push an argument for class stratification which is once again reminiscent of Soviet scholarship. I would really like to see a more comprehensive attempt to establish 1) whether living standards for the population of Turkestan were rising or falling during the fifty years of Russian colonial rule (even if this is only based on qualitative sources); 2) more research on the complex question of who was actually benefiting from Turkestan's cotton boom, given that Alimjanov himself says (rightly) that Moscow manufacturers simply ended up paying more for their raw cotton thanks to tariffs, and would have been better off importing it from the USA; 3) some use of statistics to establish the *volume* both of Turkestan's external trade with China, Afghanistan, Persia and India and of its trade with Russia in this period.

My second comment is more methodological: Alimjanov's use of historiography, whether in English or in Russian, is almost entirely confined to his introduction. In the body of the thesis he uses and in some cases analyses primary sources, but with rare exceptions these are almost never in dialogue with the historiography – even when he does use secondary works extensively (e.g. Pravilova's *Finansy Imperii*) it is usually just for the factual data they contain, rather than an engagement with their arguments. There are a number of important texts in English which are missing from his analysis and bibliography, which I will list at the end of this report. It is essential that Alimjanov makes better use of his primary research to show where his conclusions are in agreement with those of other scholars, and where they

diverge and why.

My third comment is to do with the use of sources; there are certain points where Alimjanov is relying very heavily on particular primary sources, notably А. И. Шахназаров *Сельское хозяйство в Туркестанском крае* (1908) and *Сборник узаконений и распоряжений по Таможенной части в Средней Азии* (1901). These are both valuable and important sources, but there are whole pages of the thesis which are simply paraphrasing and reproducing the information they contain, without analysis. Equally, they both date from the last years of colonial rule, and do not necessarily reflect policies as they actually existed in the 1860s and 1870s. Quite often Alimjanov seems to be taking retrospective judgements about von Kaufman's economic policies for granted, even when they are being made 20 or 30 years later. While there is considerable use of archival sources, the logic of their employment is not clear. Often Alimjanov seems to be citing them for purely factual information of a kind that is often easily available in published sources, while he does not explore them sufficiently to illuminate the decision-making processes that lay behind the introduction of particular policies or laws – for instance, as Penati (2013) has shown, the introduction of the tariff on raw cotton in 1877 was motivated purely by the need to raise revenue rather than any deep-laid plan to stimulate domestic production, but we would not know this from Alimjanov's thesis. On the other hand, when citing Girs's conclusions he uses archival documents from TsGARUz without explaining whether or how these relate to those in Girs's published report of 1884. The archival references throughout are incomplete – they include only the Fond/Opis/Delo numbers, not the author, addressee, type or date of the document, all of which are essential for the reader to evaluate it as a source.

### **Specific Comments**

pp.5-6 There is no clear connection between cotton hunger and the conquest of Central Asia – apart from anything else the dates do not work. The Russians made their most decisive moves in 1847 (construction of Fort Raim and Lepsinsk) and 1853-4 (capture of Aq-Masjid and the construction of Fort Vernyi) long before the cotton drought caused by the American Civil War. There was also a 30-year gap between the conquest of Central Asia and the widespread introduction of American Cotton. On this see Morrison (2014) and Penati (2013) in the bibliography below.

pp.6-7 the works cited as historiography for the Tsarist period are primary sources and should be evaluated as such – they are not retrospective, historical works.

p.7 On the Khoqand Khanate Alimjanov must cite and use the work of Timur Beisembiev (see below)

p.11 Here Alimjanov should mention and evaluate the arguments for economic factors in Russian expansion put forward by N. A. Khalfin and M. K. Rozhkova. He cites them in the bibliography but does not really engage with their arguments. Rozhkova's book is by far the best and most deeply-researched piece of Soviet Scholarship on this topic and Alimjanov should engage with it fully.

p.13 Note also the orthodoxy that Russian imperialism was a 'less evil', imposed after the Tashkent Conference of 1954. On this see Tillett (1969).

p.27 The memoir literature is far richer than this – Fedorov's 1913 account, for instance, gives an unparalleled insight into the inner workings of the bureaucracy. I would look at Levteeva (1986) to start.

p.32 I do not agree that the conquest of Central Asia was motivated purely by external factors in foreign policy – immediate logistical considerations and domestic politics also played an important role. On this see Morrison (2014) and Geyer (1987).

p.44 The idea of two schools of thought competing over Turkestan – one wanting to assimilate it and one wanting to retain it as a separate colony for exploitation – is intriguing, but requires more refinement. Firstly Alimjanov needs to identify who the parties espousing each point of view were, and secondly he needs to differentiate it in time. Up until the 1890s the 'paternalist' party, which was really also the party of the local military administration, predominated absolutely. From the mid-1890s they began to be challenged by the new class of technocrats in St Petersburg, notably those of the *Pereselencheskoe Upravlenie*, who wanted to see more intense peasant settlement and greater economic exploitation. This culminates in Krivoshein's famous *Zapiska* of 1912, which as Alimjanov rightly observes later on, was a plan that was never fulfilled – nevertheless the early 1900s did see much more intensive peasant colonization. It is also worth noting that assimilationist tendencies can be found on both sides of this debate – whether it is Kaufman declaring that Turkestan was 'Russian soil', or Pahlen suggesting the introduction of *zemstva* and some civilian norms of governance, or the *Pereselencheskoe Upravlenie* and Krivoshein seeking forced assimilation through the introduction of ever more Slavic peasants. On this Hofmeister (2016) might be useful.

p.46 - *Mardikor*, *Chairikor*, intelligentsia, workers – all Alimjanov is doing here is reproducing the class categories found in Soviet works, which were obliged to find signs of class stratification in Central Asian Society in this period. What can Alimjanov tell us about the actual conditions in which sharecroppers worked, or their living standards that could move beyond these empty labels?

p.55 'и поэтому обладали всеми правами подданных империи.' – not true. There were definite structures of exclusion in place, and Turkestan's inhabitants were not Russian citizens, but *inorodtsy*. On this see Morrison (2012).

p.58 There is real chronological confusion here – you cite Girs, writing in 1884, and then jump backwards to von Kaufman writing in 1873. Alimjanov needs to be clear about causation and the path along which Russian thought about land developed. Throughout the whole of this section he should be referring to the special issue of *Central Asian Survey* on the land question edited by Paolo Sartori – Alimjanov cites Sartori’s introduction and Penati’s article from this in his introduction and bibliography, but does not engage with their arguments here.

p.62 The argument about the unwillingness to invest in large development projects in Turkestan from the Central budget is interesting and important, but Alimjanov needs to differentiate this in time. There were cases of this (e.g. the Murghab estate) by the 1890s and early 1900s, however limited. Still, as a brake on many of the more grandiose visions for Turkestan’s development the reliance on the paltry local budget (always in deficit, as Alimjanov rightly notes), and this argument deserves pursuing further.

p.74 on the question of whether or not Turkestan could be transferred from military to civilian rule Alimjanov should be referring to Brower (2003), which is in his bibliography but not really used or engaged with.

p.78 ‘Промышленники-текстильщики стремились превратить Туркестан с его развитой хлопководческой отраслью в источник сырья (и рынок сбыта) для своих фабрик. Соответственно в вопросе собственности на землю фабриканты стояли за развитие в сторону частного землевладения»’

This very long quotation from Fursov requires even more qualification than it receives here – there is little evidence of industrialists agitating for Turkestan to become a source of raw materials – as Alimjanov correctly notes later on, it would have been cheaper for them to import their raw cotton from the USA without tariffs. Even the role of the state in this is quite ambiguous, as Penati (2013) explains. I find the suggestion that these invocations of the need for modernisation and development were ‘declaratory’ very interesting and quite plausible, but I am not sure that the audience was really foreign powers, as Alimjanov suggests here – the British and French had little idea of what was going on in Turkestan. The intended audience is much more likely to be domestic, and indeed bureaucratic.

p.84 the argument about *mulk* land is very over-simplified. What was abolished was not this form of private land-holding itself, but the tax privileges it once carried, and it is far from clear that this really ‘strengthened Russian power’ in Turkestan. On this see Morrison (2013).

p.87 Here Alimjanov needs to cite and engage with Penati’s (2010) article (‘Swamps, Sorghum’), and her analysis of the changes to the statute. It is in the bibliography but not used here.

p.91 The discussion of the water law requires careful reading of the many articles relating to it

which appeared in *Voprosy Kolonizatsii*. As this suggests, its purpose was primarily to facilitate further Russian colonization, rather than cotton cultivation. Alimjanov also needs to engage with the arguments put forward by Pravilova (2014) on this subject – personally I think she is wrong.

p.94 Again the argument that these grandiose development projects have a primarily ideological rather than economic rationale is plausible and intriguing but needs to be developed further.

p.95 Again, the arguments about ‘increased class differentiation’ among the peasantry come straight out of Soviet scholarship. Where is the proof?

p.99 Good point about the expensiveness of Turkestan cotton – but remember that there were also significant forces within the administration that saw cotton as a rival to Russian colonization – these two impulses were in tension with each other, as Russian colonists were no good at growing cotton. It is also true that the Semirechie railway, which would have been completed by 1916-17 had it not been for the outbreak of the First World War, would have significantly lowered grain prices in Turkestan.

p.100 Very important point about the lack of competitiveness of Turkestan cotton against that produced in the USA, and the fact that effect of tariffs was to make Moscow industrialists pay *more* for their raw cotton. Someone got rich from this, but it wasn't them. Who then?

pp.104 – 6 I don't agree that there was any concerted attempt to prevent industrialisation in Turkestan. The idea that this was prevented by law is a myth of Soviet scholarship. More probable reasons are lack of local capital and of sufficient skilled labour, and despite this there were some proposals to open textile mills in the region in the late Tsarist period, though they didn't get off the ground. The difference with India has a lot to do with the sheer difference in scale between the two markets, and India's much more extensive manufacturing inheritance from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

p.108 the argument that lack of industrial development was a side-effect of state *laissez-faire* and unwillingness to invest is more plausible, but contradict what is written above.

pp.122 – 130 the section on customs tariffs is interesting, but is basically just a paraphrase of information from the *Сборник узаконений и распоряжений по Таможенной части в Средней Азии* (1901), which is cited repeatedly on every page. There is almost no analysis of this factual data.

p.130 The volume of trade with Central Asia was so vanishingly small to begin with (a market of barely 5 million people) that I very much doubt that it significantly damaged the Indian economy when it was cut off by Russian tariffs. It may have had a more severe effect in Bukhara, but this has not been studied.

p.135 the assertion by the Governor of the Province that Samarkand occupied 'the first place' in the tea trade in Central Asia is hardly evidence that this was indeed the case – you would need to look at statistics.

p.136 – but modernization can take many forms, not just industrialisation. In Russia it was associated with the mechanization of agriculture and the commercial cultivation of grain. In Ferghana by 1914 70% of all the arable land was sown with cotton, a product that has to be marketed and cannot just be grown for subsistence. This suggests that some parts of the agrarian economy of Turkestan may have been more integrated into global markets than many parts of Russia.

p.137 I fail to understand how a high tariff on a raw material like cotton protected the interests of Russian industrialists: as we have seen several times, it meant they paid much more for raw cotton than they needed to. Restrictions on the import of manufactured goods – yes – but clearly sometimes the interests of industrialists and a state seeking economic autarky did not always coincide, something Alimjanov does not acknowledge here.

p.140 Russian control over Central Asia *may* have helped support Russian light and heavy industry, but there is absolutely no proof of this in the thesis. It is a question that has to be approached quantitatively.

p.147-9, 156, 159 on the *organizatsionnye raboty*, the attempted cadastre, and the reasons for their failure Alimjanov needs to read Penati (2010 & 2011).

p.161 On the favourable tax regime for cotton the essential reference is Penati (2013).

p.168 I would agree with the overall conclusion that the various grandiose projects for modernisation and development had a largely 'recommendatory' or rhetorical character and remained unrealised, but Alimjanov's ambitions in this thesis seem to be greater than this – to establish some of the real effects of Russian economic policies in Turkestan – and this I do not think he has managed to do.

Yours faithfully,



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