

JOINT INTRODUCTION

THE GREAT GAME

This joint introduction the Great Game is intended to give delegates on both the British and Russian sides of the Joint Crisis Simulation the basic background and framework of the Great Game period. In conjunction, both the below introduction and the joint timeline should provide the background and history of the Great Game necessary to conduct further research into the period. In particular, this introduction outlines the nature of the conflict and pointed historical context from each Europe, Britain, and Russia. The individual country guides and biographical information, however, will give further guidance and perspective on the issues that plague these two powers both historically and presently. Because of the unique nature of the Great Game, and both the vital historical precedence and current political significance, further research into the nature of the conflict is essential.

Introduction

Coined by British Intelligence Officer Arthur Conolly, the Great Game period refers to the clash of Russia's expansion into Central Asia and Britain's colonial stronghold in India and the surrounding region. Often also titled the "First Cold War," the Great Game gave way to little direct military conflict between the two powers. Instead, tensions over expansionism were fought mostly via competing spheres of influences and other forms of indirect territorial conflict. Despite the consequences of direct military conflict, both Britain and Russia, influenced by prior European models of Colonialism, began expanding into neighboring territories. This very expansion, and the desire to attain greater world power, wealth, and influence, led to the individual conflicts for Central Asian territory and influence that then spiraled into the Great Game.

The Rise of European Imperialism and the Origins of the Great Game

The Exploration and Expansion of European Territories

The rise of European Imperialism is typically attributed to the Portuguese, who began colonial exploration in the 15th century. With the goals of economic self-sustenance and market domination in mind, the Portuguese sought the lucrative natural spice resources of the Indian sub-continent and surrounding regions. By the late 15th century, the Portuguese had instead created developments in Africa and the Americas. And, famously, in 1492, the Spanish had entered the colonial race by hiring Christopher Columbus to discover an Atlantic route to India, hoping to gain an additional share of the spice trade. And upon the success of these nations in discovering resource-rich territories in Africa and the Americas, Britain, France, and nearly every other European power entered the colonial race.

In each area that these nations landed, they established a colonial model of settlement. Citizens from each nation traveled to these territories to mine and send natural resources from the areas back to Europe for the production of textiles and other finished products for resale and reuse by these powers. To reap the maximum possible benefit from these settlements, Europeans began settling permanently in these regions, ignoring the previous inhabitants and establishing extensions of their home governments. With the permanence of these settlements, and the vast potential for economic gain within them all, competition amongst nations for colonial strongholds heightened, giving way to the future of 19th and 20th century new imperialism and a competitive model implemented similarly in the Great Game.

New Imperialism in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

After a wave of independence movements in the Americas from colonial rule, the European powers adapted territorial strategies to reflect the evolving colonial landscape. Instead of annexing territories by forcing previous inhabitants out and settling on their land, the European powers exerted economic and political control over lesser developed territories.

These powers raced for this control and influence much in the same manner as they had in the colonies during throughout the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. These conflicting interests created widespread competition for strategic economic and military

power outside of Europe itself. And while conflicts nearly arose between various sets of European powers across the globe, the British Imperialism in India and Russian Imperialism in Central Asia created such intense tensions of the Great Game.

British Domination of Colonial Territory

British colonialism initially arose out of rivalry with the Spanish and Portuguese in the wake of the Anglo-Spanish Wars. To counter their subsidization of exploration routes, the British funded privateers such as Sir Francis Drake and John Hawkins to conduct similar routes. The successes of these explorations, in conjunction with the economic and religious motivations for seeking further success, the British developed colonies in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. These settlements all fell under the First British Empire, which spanned thousands of miles and millions of inhabitants, until the late 18th century.

The break-up of the First British Empire, and eventual establishment of the Second, was set in motion by the events of the American Independence movement. The eventual success of this movement in the American War of Independence in attaining separation from the British Empire expressed the need for the British Empire to alter its colonial strategy. Having lost its largest colony and greatest source of raw materials in the Americas, the British both sought other colonial territories and stronger possession of current colonies. The fear of losing other colonial strongholds and facing similar economic vulnerability led the British Empire to develop heightened governmental and security control in other colonies. The success of this strengthened colonial governance and over quelling the threats posed by Napoleonic France, has moved Britain into its Imperial Century. The glory of the Empire, now the largest colonial power in the world, and attempts to secure it have shaped the face of British foreign relations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and bred the grounds of fear for the Great Game with Russia.

Russian Progression into Central Asia

While the British built their Empire by enforcing these colonial strongholds, Tsarist Russia began gradual accruing nearby territories in Central Asia, much as the United States accrued territory in the West. Beginning in the 1860's, Russian foreign policy focused almost entirely onto territorial expansion in the Balkans, the Middle and Far East, and Asia. Through the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, Russia solidified this commitment to accretion in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. After signing the Treaty of Shimoda with Japan, the Russian Empire established commercial spheres of influence covering three of Japan's largest regions. Alexander's expansionist agenda continued this territorial expansion, with the annexation of Tashkent in 1865, Samarkand in 1868, Bokhura and Kokand in 1869, and Kokand in 1876. These gradual takeovers, however territorially significant to Russia, gained little traction and sparked little conflict from the European colonial powers.

Further Russian territorial expansions, however, became controversial, as Nicholas II encouraged the development of further spheres of influence in the Middle East and Afghanistan. These attempted expansions, in contrast to earlier Central Asian successes, directly conflicted with the interests of the European powers, especially Britain, and brought Russia markedly closer to British India. These expansionist policies generated widespread positive sentiment among the Russian ruling class, and would continue through the duration of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century. The fervor of Russian expansion, however, was met with dismay in Britain, where the threat of expansion Russia into India sparked continual concern, and eventually initiated the heart of the Great Game itself.