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COTTON AS A FACTOR OF RUSSIAN GEOPOLITICS IN CENTRAL ASIA (18TH-20TH CENTURIES)

Abstract. This article provides a critical analysis of cotton as a factor in Russian geopolitics in Central Asia during the imperial and Soviet periods. The author challenges the established thesis in Soviet historiography that the main reason for Russia's expansion into the region in the 19th century was economic interests, primarily the Russian textile industry's need for its own cotton raw material. Based on an analysis of documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the War Department of the Russian Empire in the mid-19th century, including correspondence with the Orenburg Governorate-General, the article demonstrates that the primary motives for expanding into Central Asia in the 1860s were military-strategic and geopolitical in nature. These included ensuring border security, ending raids, displacing British influence, and establishing control over the unstable steppe zone. Economic interests related to cotton were secondary during this period and were expressed primarily in merchant complaints about the quality of raw materials and trade barriers, which they attempted to resolve through diplomatic and economic measures rather than military force. Only after the establishment of the Turkestan Governorate-General did the region's systematic transformation into the empire's cotton base begin. It took about 30 years (until 1895) for the region to become economically viable thanks to the large-scale introduction of American cotton varieties. By the early 20th century, Central Asia supplied approximately half of Russia's cotton needs.

Key words: cotton, Central Asia, Russian Empire, Turkestan Governorate-General, geopolitics, annexation, economic motives, military-strategic interests.

One of the long-standing controversial issues in Russian historiography concerns the motives and nature of the annexation of new territories to the Russian state. In this work, the author examines a relatively short period in the history of the Russian Empire—the period of active annexation of Central Asia over a period of thirty-one years (1864–1895), as well as the period of the USSR (1922–1991) in the context of the geopolitical role played by such an important strategic raw material as cotton.

It is appropriate to analyze this problem within the context of landscape-geographic factors. When discussing geopolitical methodology, it is important to note that landscape-geographic factors have always played a significant, and sometimes decisive, role in Russia's advance into Central Asia. However, with rare exceptions, this factor is not taken into account when analyzing historical events. Thus, the need to ensure civil peace and control the security of routes to Central Asia in the 18th and early 19th centuries led Russia to shift from a policy of indirect control over the Kyrghyz-Kaisak zhuzes through a system of elected sul-

tans and flying detachments to the establishment of fortresses and strongholds in the steppe. These were connected into "lines" and "distances" to draw restive political elements to the country's rear and to deny access to those political forces beyond Russia's control—the Khivans, Kokandis, and British agents. This concept became dominant in Russian Central Asian policy in 1842–1853 and was personified in the Orenburg direction by General Vladimir Obruchev, who replaced Adjutant General Vasyli Perovsky as Orenburg Governor-General in 1842. The year 1864 marked a new stage in Russian geopolitics in Central Asia. From this point on, a short but intense and extensive military campaign began, culminating in the annexation of more than 4,000 square kilometers of Central Asian territory to Russia and the establishment of the Turkestan Governorate-General. This event marks the beginning of a qualitatively new period in relations between Russia and the peoples of Central Asia.

However, the historiography of the Soviet period, following the Marxist-Leninist concept of the development of productive forces and production

relations, stubbornly insisted on the priority of economic reasons for the annexation of Central Asia to Russia. The basis for this assertion was the fact that the country's light industry accelerated its development in the first half of the 19th century, leading to rapid capital accumulation. The methodological confirmation was Lenin's concept of the development of capitalism in depth and breadth, i.e. the spread of its dominance to new territories, "capitalism cannot exist and develop without the constant expansion of its sphere of dominance, without the colonization of new countries," he noted. "Manufacturers need a market immediately, and if the backwardness of other aspects of the national economy narrows the market in the old region, they will seek a market elsewhere or in other countries."¹ Even rivalry with England in the region was considered only in the context of trade competition. The main "stumbling block" with England in the region, according to Soviet researchers, was the textile trade².

However, the main documents of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and War Ministry from the mid-1850s to 1860s regarding the large-scale advance into Central Asia make no mention of the occupation of oasis territories to ensure "cotton independence" for the domestic textile industry³. The same statement applies to operational documents from the 1864–1868 advance of Russian troops to annex the region's main oases (Chimkent, Tashkent, Middle, and Lower Zeravshan) and later, during the annexation of the central and eastern Fergana Valley⁴.

Among the economic reasons for possessing a particular territory, there are only references to its role in supplying the troops with food: "The environs of Chimkent, due to their fertility and the development of agricultural cultivation, are as important for the right flank of the front line as the Alatau district is for its left end. These are two granaries, equally necessary for feeding the garrisons of the newly ac-

quired region, and until Chimkent is in our hands, we cannot count on the security of communications between Aulieata and Turkestan"⁵.

What was the Foreign Ministry's position on the possession of the cotton-growing regions of Central Asia? The reaction of the Ministry's Asian Department to the military's plans to establish a new borderline was unambiguous and in line with Russia's overall policy, as defined by this ministry. "If we expand our borders solely because we wish to annex every warlike nomadic tribe capable of raiding, then we are unlikely to ever be able to halt our southward advance. It seems that it would be more advantageous to either protect the border with a fortified line or punish predators with mobile columns <...>. It can hardly be in the government's interests to control the fate of all of Central Asia, even reaching as far as Bukhara. Such plans have not yet entered, and should hardly enter, into our political program, because they would in no way be justified by the demands of our trade or by general political considerations, and meanwhile would involve us in inevitable difficulties."⁶ Thus, when considering the geopolitical motives of Russia's military campaigns of 1865–1867 in Central Asia, one cannot help but wonder about the validity of Soviet historiography's consistent references to economic considerations as the main reasons for the annexation of the region.

The motives of both various Russian government structures and individual officials representing commerce are most fully expressed in documents that are sometimes little noticed and often unfairly forgotten by historians. This was typically due to the ideological inconsistency of such documents with the official line of Soviet historical scholarship, which was based on the primacy of materialism. For example, Soviet-era historiography considers the Russian textile industry's need for raw cotton as the primary motive for the annexation of Central Asia. However, it is confirmed only by the temporary difficulties experienced by the Ivanovo, Yaroslavl, and Narva factories because of the lack of high-quality American fine-staple cotton due to the American Civil War of 1861–1865.

¹ Lenin, V.I. *Development of Capitalism in Russia. The Process of Formation of the Internal Market for Large-Scale Industry* // Lenin V.I. Works. Vol. 3. 4th ed. Moscow, 1946, pp. 520–522.

² Khalfin, N.A. *Russia's Policy in Central Asia (1847–1868)*. Moscow, 1968, pp. 28–31.

³ Serebryannikov, A.G. *Collection of materials for the history of the conquest of the Turkestan region. 1864. Part 1. Vol. 17. Tashkent, 1914, pp. 201–202.*

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 117, 257.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 124.

⁶ Serebryannikov, A.G. *Collection of materials for the history of the conquest of the Turkestan region. 1865. Part 2. Vol. 20. Tashkent, 1914, p. 7.*

This argument do not stand up to serious criticism, firstly because American cotton was successfully replaced by equivalent cotton purchased in Egypt and British India. Secondly, the industrial circles of post-reform Russia lacked sufficient influence over the ruling elite, comprised of the nobility, to provoke large-scale, protracted military action in their interests. Even contemporaries – researchers of Russia's economic development, also denied the influence of the American Civil War as a reason for the empire's expansion in Central Asia⁷.

Documents from the first half of the 19th century, the period of active annexation of Central Asia territories into Russia until 1864, which trace the interests of Russian industrialists, indicate only feeble attempts to normalize the cotton trade with Bukhara through purely economic means. Specifically, these included organizing a trading partnership, opening a permanent trade mission in the Bukhara Khanate, and reducing or eliminating duties on the transit of foreign textile goods. Rather illustrative document is the "Note on the Trip to Bukhara by Ivan Andreev Bykovsky, a Moscow 2nd Guild Merchant's Son, in 1861". Bykovsky reported that he "was subjected to the following unfavorable commercial practices on the part of local authorities": despite the 1858 interstate agreement reached by the embassy of Colonel N. Ignatiev, he was charged a 10% duty instead of the prescribed 5%. The Bukharan authorities took similar actions against three other Russian merchants. Bykovsky's attempts to resolve this issue with the Bukharan authorities were unsuccessful, and he filed a complaint with the Orenburg Governor-General. He proposed the following: "If the Bukharan merchants are constantly expanding the scope of their trade with Russia, then it is clear that they find profit in this but they create possible obstacles for the Russians, wishing to avoid their rivalry. In order to protect both the persons and the capital of Russian subjects who wish to conduct trade in Bukhara in the future, I dare to propose the following. Would Your Excellency be pleased to invite the Bukharan merchants and caravanbashis who have now arrived in Orenburg, to reprimand them for their behavior towards me and other Russians, and in the future to propose that they provide Russian mer-

chants with the same favorable reception that they themselves enjoy in Russia. Or otherwise, to expect that they, too, in Russia will be deprived of the rights and protection that they have constantly enjoyed until now."⁸

Several years later, a group of Russian merchants, including Bykovsky, again drew the attention of the Orenburg Governor-General Bezak to the difficulties in the trade of Central Asian cotton. This time, they mentioned the low quality of the raw materials, and the merchants requested assistance in acquiring raw materials locally in Bukhara. For this purpose, the Chairman of the Moscow branch of the Manufacturing and Commercial Councils, A. Khludov, sent his son, Mikhail Khludov⁹, to Bukhara. In his report, "Obstacles to Free Trade Encountered by Russian Merchants in Bukhara," dated July 3, 1864, Khludov pointed out a number of trade difficulties for Russian merchants: lack of choice of residence and storage location; limited freedom to manage one's capital and freedom of postal service; lack of freedom of movement within the city of Bukhara. He proposed measures to eliminate them, which included purely diplomatic steps¹⁰.

As stated in the "Note on Bukhara Cotton," submitted by Moscow textile manufacturers to the Orenburg Governor-General in 1863, "the poor quality of the goods, which is not due to a natural defect in the cotton but to failure to clean it of seeds and debris, as well as due to poor packaging, reduces its price by another 40 percent. At present, some cotton spinners desire to purchase the goods locally, in Bukhara, and deliver them to their factories in Russia properly processed. The benefits of this business are clear to everyone. At present, all that remains is to wish for this project, which is beneficial to Russia, to be carried out. It can succeed even more surely through mutual understanding between the cotton spinners <...> Time is of the essence: machines for cleaning and packaging the cotton must be ordered in advance, so that they can be in Orenburg no later than September, for onward shipment to Bukhara. If we miss another year, we will pay millions, as is the case today"¹¹.

⁸ State Archives of the Orenburg Region (hereinafter referred to as GAOR). F. 6. Op. 10. D. 7736. L. 54-55.

⁹ Ibid. D. 7878, L. 5

¹⁰ Ibid. L. 10-11.

¹¹ Ibid. L. 1.

⁷ Bezobrazov V.P. Essays on the Nizhny Novgorod Fair. Moscow, 1865, p. 34.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs finally expressed the concerns of Russian textile workers. Specifically, the Ministry reported to the Orenburg Governor-General on April 8, 1864, that “the Minister of Finance reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a complaint from Moscow cotton mill owners that Bukharan traders, taking advantage of the shortage of cotton in Russia, had begun importing this product half-mixed with cotton seeds since 1862, and were also adding stones, old blankets, and various rubbish to the bales, so that the *pood*¹² of Bukharan cotton sometimes yielded barely 15 *funts*¹³ of usable cotton. In order to develop our trade with Bukharan, State Secretary Reutern drew attention to the need to take measures to prevent these counterfeits, which would harm the Bukharan traders themselves, lowering the prices for their cotton and reducing the sales of their goods in Russia”¹⁴

It's important to note that this letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was sent to Orenburg at a time when fighting was already underway in the Turkestan region, i.e., the military campaign against the Kokand Khanate had begun, marking the beginning of the large-scale annexation of Central Asia. The document makes no mention of securing the interests of the Russian textile industry through military force, which would have been quite appropriate had hostilities begun.

Thus, the analysis of historical sources does not support the primacy of economic motives in the annexation of Central Asian territory to Russia. Apparently, the theory that these motives predominated dates back to the Soviet period – viewing history through the prism of the development of productive forces and production relations. However, in our opinion, while economic interests in gaining control of the region were certainly present, the primary motives for over thirty years remained geopolitical, expressed in the very specific geopolitical strategy of the Russian Imperial Army.

The incorporation of the Central Asian region into the Russian Empire required a certain amount of effort to develop the economies of these territo-

ries. However, the military and political significance of the new territorial acquisitions long dominated economic feasibility: only in 1895, thirty-one years after the start of the military campaign in the region, did Russian Turkestan cease to be economically unprofitable. This was largely due to the expansion and development of cotton cultivation¹⁵.

The quality of the cotton grown here was very low. The short, coarse fiber, low strength, and elasticity of the thread did not satisfy Russian entrepreneurs. As a result, starting in the 1860s, experimental plantations sown with American and Egyptian varieties were established in the region. Turkestan Governor-General K. Kaufman sent specialists to North America to study methods for growing high-quality cotton, which yielded positive results.

In this regard, in the 1870s, there were attempts to replace the short-fiber, low-yielding local varieties of cotton – *guzi* (*Gossypium herbaceum*), with varieties of the long-fiber South American maritime cotton, *Sea Island* (*Gossypium barbadense*)¹⁶. However, due to the late maturity of this cotton, attempts to replace it were unsuccessful and abandoned. In the 1880s, they resumed, but this time with early-maturing Mexican cotton varieties of the *Upland type* (*Gossypium hirsutum*). The results were successful.

By the late 1880s, most of the area in Turkestan was sown with American cotton seeds. Over the course of five years (from 1886 to 1890), the area under cotton increased almost fivefold. From 1888 to 1913, cotton crops increased in the Fergana region from 37,800 hectares to 304,000 hectares, in the Samarkand region – from 8,700 hectares to 34,500 hectares, and in the Syrdarya region – from 28,200 hectares to 68,300 hectares. The total area of cotton cultivation in Central Asia increased from 195 thousand hectares in 1902 to 385 thousand hectares in 1912. In 1913, the region produced 684.7 thousand tons (approximately 42.8 million *poods*) of raw cotton. Overall, the gross cotton harvest in Central Asia increased almost sevenfold between 1890 and 1914. The

¹² The pood – is an obsolete Russian unit of mass equal to 40 funt (Russian pound) (translator's comment).

¹³ The Russian pound (funt) is an obsolete Russian unit of measurement of mass. It is equal to 409.51718 g (14.445293 oz) (translator's comment).

¹⁴ GAOR. F. 6. Op. 10. D.7736. L. 14.

¹⁵ Peterson, M. K. White Gold Fever: The Quest to Grow Cotton in Central Asia. Annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago, IL, January 7, 2012. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267531279_White_Gold_Fever_The_Quest_to_Grow_Cotton_in_Central_Asia

¹⁶ Khotamov, N.B. The beginning of sowing of the American cotton variety in Central Asia and the role of Russian banks in its development // Historian (Muarrikh). 2023. №. 1 (33). P. 21-34.

bulk of this cotton was exported to Russia: 6 million *poods* (96 thousand tons) in 1902 and 14 million *poods* (224 thousand tons) in 1912. The total value of cotton exported before the war was estimated at 138 million rubles¹⁷.

Turkestan cotton already provided a third of Russian consumption in 1900, and 43% in 1910 (the annual consumption of cotton fiber by the Russian textile industry by 1914–1915 reached 24.64 million *poods* (394 thousand tons). In the 1910s, on average, half of Russia's cotton needs were met by supplies from abroad, the other half by domestic, mainly Central Asian, production. The 1914–1915 season proved to be quite favorable, meeting 70% of Russia's needs: 15.57 million *poods* (249 thousand tons) of cotton fiber were exported from Central Asia, and 1.75 million *poods* – from Transcaucasia¹⁸.

The Fergana Valley became the main producer of Central Asian cotton, accounting for 62% of all cotton shipped to Russia in 1913. By comparison, the Syr Darya and Samarkand regions together accounted for only 21.4%. Thanks to the establishment of large-scale production and primary processing of cotton, the Fergana region's level of industrial development was comparable to the Kharkov and Nizhny Novgorod provinces: two-thirds of Turkestan's cotton mills were located here¹⁹.

Along with Russian Turkestan, cotton production also developed intensively in the Bukhara and Khiva khanates. In Bukhara and Khiva, 140,200 hectares were planted with cotton in 1914, and by 1915, that figure had risen to 152,600 hectares. Before the war, Bukhara's share of Russia's cotton supply, supplied primarily by Bukharan-Jewish merchants, was approximately 13%.²⁰ In Khiva, approximately 16% of all cultivated land was planted with cotton in 1909. By the start of World War I, two-thirds of Khiva's cotton fields were sown with American varieties. In 1909, 500 thousand *poods*

(8 thousand tons) of cotton fiber were exported to Russia from the Khiva oasis, including the Amu Darya department, and in 1915, as many as 900 thousand *poods* (14.4 thousand tons) of cotton fiber were sent from the Khiva Khanate to Russia²¹.

By the 1890s, Central Asia had become Russia's main cotton supplier. However, the expansion of cotton cultivation led to a reduction in the area devoted to food crops, which led to rising bread prices and negatively affected the livelihoods of the local population. However, while Russian officials in Central Asia pointed out this imbalance in the region's economy to St. Petersburg, they themselves took no measures to mitigate it, relying on the concept of a unified economic complex within the Russian Empire, which would allow for the redistribution of labor and goods across its entire territory²².

The negative consequences of the region's monoculture development became particularly pronounced in the 20th century. It is important to consider that the growth of cotton crops in Central Asia was largely achieved at the expense of peasant farmland, previously focused on food production, including grain cultivation. As a result, Turkestan began importing grain in increasing volumes: 4 million *poods* (64,000 tons) in 1907 and 12.5 million *poods* (200,000 tons) in 1914. The Fergana Valley naturally became the main consumer of grain²³.

With the outbreak of World War I, cotton supplies to Russia from abroad decreased, which increased the demand for Turkestan cotton and, accordingly, the price of a *pood* of Central Asian cotton fiber increased: in 1913 it was 24 rubles, then in 1915 it reached 32 rubles (+ 33%), and in 1916 – 36 rubles (+ 50%). This circumstance prompted the population to further expand cotton cultivation. In 1914, the area under cotton in Turkestan occupied 502 thousand hectares, then in 1915 – 570.7 thousand hectares (according to other sources – 524 thousand hectares), and in 1916 – 582.1 thousand hectares, which amounted to 16% of all cultivated land in Turkestan. However,

¹⁷ Arapov, A.V. Russian Cotton Project in Turkestan. Early 20th Century. URL: <https://memoryoffuture.blogspot.com/2011/03/xx.html>

¹⁸ Konotopov, M.V., Lembersky, M.N. Development of the cotton industry in Russia 1900-1917 // Innovations and Investments. 2016. №. 2. P. 69-75.

¹⁹ Arapov, A.V. Russian Cotton Project in Turkestan. Early 20th Century.

²⁰ Cohoon W. Russian Nationalists' Misconception of the Turkestan Cotton Industry, 1911 // Anthós. 2013. Vol. 5: Iss. 1, P. 5-31. <https://doi.org/10.15760/anthos.2013.5>

²¹ Arapov A.V. Pre-revolutionary Turkestan. The Cotton Industry under the Control of Foreign Capital. URL: <http://memoryoffuture.blogspot.com/2011/03/xx.html>

²² Mamadaliev, I. A. Economic crisis as a factor of social destabilization: Turkestan in the late 19th – early 20th centuries // Bulletin of the Tajik State University of Law, Business and Politics. Humanitarian Sciences Series. 2013. No. 2 (54). P. 213-224.

²³ Ibid.

er, there was no further increase in Turkestan cotton production during the war²⁴.

A serious problem associated with the war, which had a painful impact on the majority of the population in Central Asia, was the significant reduction in imports of grain and industrial consumer goods from Russia due to the decline in their production because of the mass conscription of Russian peasants and workers to the front in 1914–1916. As a result, the price of bread rose faster than the price of cotton: by 100% in 1915, and by 400% in 1916. The catastrophic bread shortage was exacerbated by shortages of sugar and textiles. Reduced grain supplies and rationed cotton prices led to a decline in cotton sowing. As a result, beginning in 1916–1917, cotton cultivation began to decline. In 1916, spring cotton sowings were at their peak, but due to the initial conscription of local populations for work on the home front and the associated unrest, the actual autumn cotton harvest was lower than in previous years. In Bukhara and Khiva, the area under cotton cultivation declined from 147,000 hectares in 1916 to 86,500 hectares in 1917.

From late 1917 to early 1918, economic policy in Turkestan came under the purview of the Soviet government. Given its strategic importance, the cotton industry was at the center of the Soviet government's economic concerns in Turkestan. On February 28, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan issued a decree nationalizing all cotton reserves. Since this alarmed the peasant farmers, a few days later an additional order followed stating that this did not apply to workers' cotton reserves. Then, on March 5, 1918, a decree was issued nationalizing cotton and related industries, such as "oil mills, soap factories, and cotton factories, as well as trading enterprises for the purchase of raw materials and manufactured goods." Among other things, 296 cotton gins and 5 cotton factories were nationalized at that time²⁵.

The nationalization of the cotton industry began a few weeks after the defeat of the Kokand Autonomous Republic. Both of these events political-

ly liquidated the large businesses of Turkestan's cotton magnates, forcing them to seek emigration and capital transfers outside of Russia. A significant portion of their cotton reserves was by then hidden, including in Russia itself, Turkestan, and Bukhara²⁶. Due to the deteriorating military and political situation in central Russia, as well as the blockade of communications with Turkestan via Orenburg and Krasnovodsk, cotton from Central Asia could not be shipped in sufficient quantities in 1918, leading to a halt in textile production in Russia. For similar reasons, desperately needed grain was also not delivered to Central Asia. This is evidenced not only by economists' research but also by the recollections of local residents²⁷.

The Soviet Union, as the geopolitical successor to the Russian Empire, continued the agricultural policies of its predecessor, further skewing the agricultural production bias toward cotton. From the 1920s to the 1950s, this was driven not only by the need to obtain raw materials for the textile industry but also by the need to produce high-quality gunpowder for small arms and rocket fuel²⁸. However, by the 1960s, such a need for the defense industry had disappeared due to technological advances. Nevertheless, by the *Perestroika* time, raw cotton harvests reached six million tons in Uzbekistan alone and one million tons in Tajikistan. Virtually all the arable land in the Central Asian oases was devoted to cotton cultivation. With the collapse of the USSR, this disparity had a detrimental effect on the food supply of Central Asian countries.

After the collapse of the USSR, the cotton-growing zone found itself outside Russia's borders. Russia found itself without its own cotton and was forced to purchase it abroad, primarily from the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan (45%), Turkmenistan (7%), Kazakhstan (5%), and Tajikistan (4%), as well as China (15%). Currently, although purchasing cotton from Central Asia is not vital for Russia, the issue of ensuring an uninterrupted supply of this raw mate-

²⁴ Arapov, A.V. Russian Cotton Project in Turkestan. Early 20th Century.

²⁵ Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the Turkestan Territory on the nationalization of the cotton industry. March 5, 1918 // *Nasha Gazeta*, the body of the Executive Committee of the Tashkent Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, №. 43, March 7, 1918.

²⁶ Arapov, A.V. Russian Cotton Project in Turkestan. Early 20th Century.

²⁷ Dubovitsky, V.V. Andrey Evlampievich Madji. Half a Century of Scientific Research in Central Asia. Dushanbe, 2018. Pp. 29-32.

²⁸ Isaev, A.V. Gunpowder and Ammunition Production as a Bottleneck in the Soviet Military Economy and Its Impact on Armed Struggle in 1941–1945 // *Bulletin of Volgograd State University. Series 4, History. Regional Studies. International Relations*. 2025. Vol. 30, No. 2. Pp. 21–30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.2.2>

rial for the domestic textile industry nonetheless arises²⁹. Purchasing Central Asian cotton in the required quantities is currently impossible for Russia due to both a sharp decline in local production (in Tajikistan, by two-thirds of the 1988 volume) and the deterioration in the quality of cotton fiber due to the cessation of local seed production³⁰.

One way for finding new sources of cotton fiber could be cotton cultivation in southern Russia. On January 31, 2018, at the All-Russian Agronomic Conference, the Ministry of Agriculture announced that

Russia would begin industrial cultivation this year and harvest its first cotton crop of a specially selected "northern" variety. Currently, approximately 250,000 tons of cotton fiber are required to meet fully Russia's needs. To achieve this volume, large areas, approximately 300,000 hectares, are required³¹.

In conclusion, it can be stated that cotton's role in Russia's geopolitics regarding Central Asia has never been decisive. Possession or control over this region was driven by military and political goals in the Middle East. An aberration in the assessment of the reasons for the Russian Empire's expansion into the region occurred in Soviet historiography precisely at a time when the region truly played a key role in providing the country with this raw material.

²⁹ Shiotani M. Russian Preference for Red Printed Cotton from Central Asia and Industrialization. *The Asian review of World Histories*, 2020. 9(1), P. 4-23. DOI: 10.1163/22879811-12340083

³⁰ Baliev, A. The cotton problem in Russia: causes and consequences before and after the collapse of the USSR // *Military-political analytics Internet journal*. URL: <https://vpoanalytics.com/vooruzhenie-i-tehnika/khlopkovaya-problema-v-rossii-prichiny-i-posledstviya-do-i-posle-raspada-sssr/>

³¹ Russia will receive domestic cotton this year // *Vedomosti*. January 31, 2018. URL: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/news/2018/01/31/749543-hlopok>

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