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Publisher Routledge

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Geopolitics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title-content=t713635150>

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Online Publication Date: 01 March 2006

To cite this Article O'Hara, Sarah and Heffernan, Michael(2006)'From Geo-Strategy to Geo-Economics: The 'Heartland' and British Imperialism Before and After MacKinder',*Geopolitics*,11:1,54 — 73

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/14650040500524079

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650040500524079>

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From Geo-Strategy to Geo-Economics: The ‘Heartland’ and British Imperialism Before and After MacKinder

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In this paper we examine the changing perception of Central Asia and the Caucasus to Imperial Britain from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries and consider the importance of Mackinder’s 1904 paper ‘The Geographical Pivot of History’ to this process. In it we argue that Central Asia and the Caucasus are seen first as an important buffer zone essential to keeping the Russia aggressors at bay and ensuring Britain’s continued dominance of India. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the region had emerged as a major source of raw materials, particularly oil, and as such was no longer seen as merely a buffer zone, but a considerable prize in itself. Mackinder’s paper, which emerged at a critical point in this transition, served as an important synthesis of these long-standing and widely shared British concerns about the region and provided a clear and concise assessment of the region’s geo-strategic and geo-economic importance and as such its global significance.

INTRODUCTION

This essay is concerned with the role of Central Asia and the Caucasus in British imperialism from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries. It seeks to explain both the continuities and the changes in British attitudes towards this region through this period. Halford Mackinder’s widely cited 1904 lecture at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) is considered here as a specific contribution to this much wider, unfolding debate.¹

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The paper is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the predominantly geo-strategic character of Victorian debates about Central Asia.² At this stage, the region was seen primarily as the strategically vulnerable 'back-door' to India. The second section focuses on the development of a new, geo-economic analysis of the region. By the early twentieth century British interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus were governed by increasingly elaborate geo-economic calculations about the likely impact of the area's potentially limitless resources on the global balance of power. Mackinder's 1904 description of Eurasia as 'the geographical pivot of history' emerged at a critical moment in this transition and can be seen as a clear and succinct summary of existing geo-strategic ideas embellished by new geo-economic considerations.

THE BACKDOOR TO INDIA: CENTRAL ASIA AND VICTORIAN BRITAIN

The Victorian view of Central Asia was shaped by nearly 200 years of intense competition between the empires of Russia and Britain. At first the two sides had merely watched each other from afar separated as they were by nearly 2000 miles of barren and inhospitable desert plains, but in 1717 the Russian Czar, Peter the Great, launched a major military campaign against the Central Asian Khanate of Khiva.³ The Czar made no secret of the fact that taking Khiva was merely a stepping stone to his ultimate objective of India, which he viewed as being the key to global supremacy.⁴ Although his army was annihilated forcing him to curtail his activities in Central Asia,⁵ he continued his southwards push via the Caspian, and in the Persian Campaign of 1722–1723, Peter succeeded in bringing the towns of Baku and Derbent, along with their surrounding lands, into his empire.⁶ While some of Peter's gains were lost after his death in 1725 Russia's momentum continued to be resolutely southward. Russia's southward push was monitored by the British, although until the 1830s it had little direct impact on their interests. The situation changed dramatically in 1837, however, when the Shah of Persia, with unofficial support from the Russians, attacked Herat, considered by the British to be in their sphere of interest.⁷ Although the Shah failed in his bid, Russia's role in events heightened tensions between England and Russia and was in effect the trigger for a prolonged and clandestine struggle between the two empires for the control of Central Asia.⁸

The events of 1837 prompted Britain to take military action against Afghanistan, with the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, arguing that the attack on Afghanistan was 'a decisive move and may bring on great events, but I believe necessary. This is no less than the question who is to be master of Central Asia!'⁹ The Afghan war, however, was an unmitigated disaster resulting in one of the most humiliating military defeats ever suffered by the British.¹⁰ On hearing of the British advance in Afghanistan, the Russian

government saw an opportunity to progress its own interests in the region with Czarist forces embarking on a second ill-fated expedition against Khiva. Although the disastrous Afghan and Khivan campaigns brought a temporary halt to the active interference of the two empires in the affairs in Asia, rivalries between the two sides did not stop, merely transferring to other frontiers and culminating in the Crimean War of 1853–1856.¹¹ But following Russia's defeat the Czarist authorities turned their attention once again to Central Asia and by the 1860s Russia's activities in the region were once again dominating the news in Britain.¹² Each new conquest stirred up debate, much of it centred on how best to protect India from attack by the Russians.¹³ Two schools of thought emerged, the 'Forward School' who believed that British interference in Afghanistan was essential for the future security of India, and the non-interventionist 'Backward' or 'Lawrence School',¹⁴ who opposed any ideas of expansion, believing that Afghanistan formed a natural buffer between the British and Russian Empires. Until the mid 1870s the opinions of proponents of a forward policy were largely ignored by the incumbent Liberal government, but the defeat of the Liberals in the 1874 election heralded a shift in British policy towards greater intervention. The adoption of a more interventionist policy was applauded in some quarters. Sir Bartle Frere, for example, an active member and sometime President of the RGS was an ardent supporter of the Forward School, and welcomed the fact that the policy of "masterly inactivity" had at last been abandoned, while at the same time arguing that Britain needed to adopt an even more aggressive policy in the region.¹⁵

Frere's views were shared by Lord Lytton who in 1876 was appointed viceroy of India.¹⁶ Shortly after Lytton arrived in Calcutta he wrote to the Afghan Emir informing him that the British intended to send a 'mission' to Kabul, but it was denied entry. He tried again two years later sending his envoy, Sir Neville Chamberlain to Afghanistan, and was still refused entry.¹⁷ At the same time reports were emerging that a Russian mission had been allowed to enter Kabul.¹⁸ On hearing the news Lytton decided that action had to be taken and he began immediate preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan. The threat of war prompted considerable debate in England with Russia's role in the region being singled out for particular attention. Lengthy articles and commentaries focusing on Russia's past and present activities began to appear in all the major newspapers, while the views and opinions of various authorities on the region were solicited and analysed.¹⁹ British troops eventually entered Afghanistan in late 1878, but unlike the first Anglo-Afghan war, the second was a triumph for Britain. Defeating the Afghan tribes, however, did not necessarily mean that Britain controlled them, and British troops suffered repeated attacks with the massacre of the British Mission in Kabul in September 1879 heightening fears of a repeat of the debacle of the first Afghan-Anglo war. The deteriorating situation in Afghanistan provided Gladstone with an ideal opportunity to lambast

Disraeli's foreign policy and played an important role in the eventual defeat of the Tories in the 1880 general election. With the Liberals back in power British troops were recalled from Afghanistan²⁰ and shortly afterwards a Joint Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission was set up to delimit the Afghan border.²¹

Gladstone's insistence that the Russians posed no threat to India provoked derision in some quarters. One of the most prominent commentators on the subject was the traveller and journalist Charles Marvin who had lived and been partly educated in Russia. Fluent in Russian, Marvin had travelled throughout the empire and was personally acquainted with numerous high-ranking officials. Renowned as a leading authority on Central Asia, his insights into the Russian psyche were considered to be second to none.²² Between 1879 and 1890, Marvin produced a huge number of letters, articles, pamphlets and books²³ covering amongst other things commerce, the oil industry, Russian railway developments and most importantly Russia's military advance.²⁴ A common theme throughout all his work was the need for Britain to adopt a vigorous policy to stop Russia's advance in Central Asia. Marvin deplored Gladstone's stance on Central Asia and in 1880 began a forceful campaign aimed at highlighting what he called the 'appalling stupidity' of '[t]he past and present policy of Mr. Gladstone's government of making a Chinese wall of Afghanistan to keep out Russia.'²⁵

Marvin was a skilled publicist and went to great lengths to promote his ideas at the highest levels in the British political system. The fact that he successfully forecast a number of events only served to heighten his status in the eyes of the British public. Early in 1881, for example, Marvin published a short pamphlet on the Russian railway to Herat and India, distributing 1,000 copies to Parliament and the press. In the piece Marvin anticipated the 'immense revolution that would be accomplished by the railway'.²⁶ Although his opinions were initially ridiculed within a few years the railway was built. Marvin also made much of the implications of the Russians taking the strategically important centre of Merv.²⁷ By taking Merv Russia would have reached a point where it could easily take heart. When this occurred in February 1884 there was outrage in Britain prompting a renewed debate on the Central Asia Question. As soon as Marvin heard the news he wrote an extended report outlining its implication. 'The annexation of Merv', he argued:

is something more than an act merely calling for condemnation. Herat, the key of India, is placed in peril. The Cossack is brought into actual contact with the Afghan: and England is compelled to decide and to decide at once, whether the future frontier separating the two empires in Asia shall be left to the exclusive selection of Russia or whether she will take instant measures to render the annexation of Merv the final step in the Russian advance in the direction of India.²⁸

Marvin had intended to send his report to every British Member of Parliament (MP) as well as the press, but the debate occurred several days earlier than anticipated, before his pamphlet was due to be published. He therefore took the manuscript to the publishers, Messrs Allen, and persuaded them to place their entire operation at his disposal. By the evening the manuscript had been type set and 25 advanced copies printed. These were immediately circulated to the London press and the House of Commons. Further copies were printed over night and the lobby messengers were persuaded to hand copies of the pamphlet to MPs as they arrived. By the time the debate started most MPs had been given a copy of the report.

Marvin's views clearly influenced the tone of the debate with MPs from all parties insisting that the Russians could no longer be trusted and that the government needed to take firm action on the issue.²⁹ Although Gladstone was apparently unconvinced, Marvin's prophecy was apparently borne out within a year when Russian forces attacked the oasis of Panjdeh located upstream of Merv.³⁰ Britain's reaction was an immediate mobilisation of her troops and as the war clouds deepened Marvin decided to issue a popular account of the Afghan Question. The 200-page book *The Russians at the Gate of Herat* was written and printed in seven days and became an immediate success, selling over 60,000 copies.³¹ At the same time Marvin continued his bitter crusade against the Gladstone government via the newspapers writing a string of articles on the issue. In the event, war was averted when the two sides reached a diplomatic solution whereby Russia withdrew from its furthest point of advance in return for a free hand in Panjdeh. A year later the two sides finally came to an agreement on the demarcation of the permanent northern frontier for Afghanistan, under which Afghanistan ceded a significant amount of territory to the Russians.³²

The demarcation of the northern frontier and the shift in Russian strategy towards the Far East temporarily diminished the importance of Central Asia, although the region was never entirely absent from British debates.³³ India's apparent vulnerability remained a constant source of anxiety, particularly after the rapid development of the Russian railway network.³⁴ The rationale for these immense transcontinental railways was analysed and discussed in newspapers and magazines and debated at public lectures with many commentators highlighting the strategic military importance of the Russian railways.³⁵ The most important lines were the Transcaucasus Railway which was started in the 1870s and reached Baku on the Caspian Coast in 1882, the Trans-Caspian Railway that was laid-down in the late 1880s, the Trans-Siberian Railway built in the 1890s and the Orenburg-Tashkent Railway constructed between 1900 and 1906.³⁶ The completion of the first two lines meant that with the exception of two breaks, the mountains of the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, there was a continuous rail link between St. Petersburg, on the Baltic Coast, and Samarkand located at the heart of the Eurasian continent.

Lord Curzon, one of the first non-Russians to travel the Trans-Caspian railway in September and October 1888, made much of the railway's importance³⁷ noting that 'the construction of the railway means the absolute and final russification of the middle zone of Central Asia'.³⁸ In highlighting its military significance, Curzon noted that the:

military and strategical consequences of the line are so obvious as to be perceptible even to a civilian... the effects of the line upon the Afghan Frontier Question, and therefore indirectly upon this country are these. Firstly it enables Russia on the outbreak of war, to place considerable local force without delay in the near vicinity of the frontier and of Herat. Secondly, it enables her to bring supplies for that force from the Caspian. Thirdly it enables her to reinforce it by the military resources of the Caucasus and of European Russia.³⁹

Curzon also outlined the importance of the railway on trade which he believed had been 'foolishly underestimated' and would have an immense impact on the British trade in the region. In a presentation at the RGS in 1889, Curzon further argued that Russian activity had already undermined British commercial interests in the region and that the Trans-Caspian railway gave 'an absolute transit monopoly of the products of Central Asia, of its cotton, its raw and dyed silks.'⁴⁰

The issue of railways highlighted by both Marvin and Curzon in the 1880s resurfaced periodically over the next two decades. One area of concern was the ease with which the Russians could build branch lines from the Trans-Caspian Railway to the Afghan frontier. Clearly the Russians viewed this as a possibility and in July 1898, Sir Nicholas O'Connor, the British Ambassador to Russia informed the Prime Minister that the Russian authorities were keen to link the Trans-Caspian railway to the Indian railway system via Afghanistan. In his note he commented that the Russian Finance Minister, 'Mr. Witte', had argued that such a rail link would stimulate commercial interests and hopefully defuse any antagonism between Britain and Russia. Moreover Witte argued that the railway link would be of greater benefit to Britain than Russia from a military point of view as Britain had more troops stationed in the region.⁴¹ But Russia's renewed interest in the region sounded the alarm-bells in London once again and in mid-1899 Lt-Col McSwiney of the 1st Lancers was dispatched from Simla on an official fact-finding mission visit to Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan. In his report he noted that 'Everything points to the strengthening of the Russian forces along the Amu Daria'. Moreover, he comments that preparations were underway to extend the railway line and that 'both banks of the Amu Daria between Charjui and Kerki had been surveyed for a line of railway, which would link the Trans-Caspian railway to Termez on the Afghan border.'⁴² McSwiney also drew attention to the fact that rolling stock on the

Trans-Caspian Railway was far in excess of ordinary requirements and that one could only conclude that it was for military use.⁴³ The start of construction of the Orenburg-Tashkent line in 1900, which would provide a much faster and more direct route to Moscow was seen as further evidence of renewed Russian interest in the region and during the first few years of the 1900s Russia's activities in Central Asia, Afghanistan and increasingly Persia were once again in the news.

The development of Russia's extensive railway network across Central Asia was seen by many as the means of unifying the vast Eurasian landmass and with this unification came power. Writing in 1883, for example, the historian J. R. Seeley, argued that the balance of power was shifting from maritime nations to large continental-sized states commenting that those countries that had control of such landmasses notably Russia and the United States would 'surpass in power the states now called great.'⁴⁴ Gaining absolute control of continental landmasses was critically important. As Marvin noted 'Russia, as she settles down in Central Asia, becomes more and more unassailable.'⁴⁵ Curzon was of the same view: 'the Russian Empire in Central Asia is impregnable,' he wrote, 'every avenue of approach is in her own hands: there is no enemy at her gate. No Armada can threaten where there are no seas; no hostile army can operate at such a gigantic distance from her base.'⁴⁶

A significant increase in the number of articles relating to Russia's activities in Central Asia, the Afghan Question and the Persian Question emerged at the turn of the 20th century largely prompted by the further expansion of the railway network.⁴⁷ At the same time concerns were also being voiced as to Russia's activities in Tibet with rumours abounding that the Russians had signed a secret pact with China agreeing to relinquish her interests in the region. The possibility of a Russian invasion of the mountain kingdom prompted Curzon, then Viceroy of India, to seek permission from London to send a mission to Lhasa under the eccentric leadership of Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband. This was granted somewhat reluctantly by the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, who was clearly anxious to avoid angering the Russians. In his statement to Parliament, Balfour insisted that the mission was intended merely to remind the Tibetans that they must respect the border with Sikkam. But with Curzon's consent, the eager Younghusband forced the Tibetan authorities to sign a 75-year indemnity which allowed the British to occupy the strategically important Chumbi Valley.⁴⁸

By this stage, however, Germany's activities were attracting attention in both London and St. Petersburg as both countries felt increasingly threatened by the Kaiser's aggressive foreign policy. Prompted by France, who had established cordial relations with both Britain and Russia and who was also concerned by Germany's expansive policies, the two countries agreed to put aside their long term rivalries signing the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907.⁴⁹

FROM 'BACKDOOR' TO PRIZE: CENTRAL ASIA, THE CAUCASUS
AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY BRITAIN

While British interests in Central Asia during the mid-late 1800s had been centred on the need to defend India, at the turn of the twentieth century other issues were coming to the fore, namely the region's rich resource base. Central Asia's economic potential had long attracted the attention of British businessmen and explorers with one of the earliest accounts of the region provided by the British merchant Anthony Jenkinson who visited Turkestan in 1558–1559 to investigate the possibility of developing trade links.⁵⁰ With Russia's advance into Central Asia, reports of its mineral wealth began to emerge. In 1771, the Dzhezkazgan copper deposits, among the richest in the world, were discovered in the heart of the Kazakh steppe—where half a century later the massive Karaganda coal field was also found.⁵¹ Elsewhere deposits of gold and lead were mined, but increasingly it was the enormous oil deposits of the southern Caucasus that attracted foreign interest. Travellers passing through the southern Caucasus had long commented on the occurrence of oil seepages and the presence of 'eternal pillars of fire' in the Baku region of modern day Azerbaijan. Until the early 1800s only small amounts of oil were extracted, but following the region's re-annexation into the Russian Empire a primitive oil industry emerged. Initially the region's development was hindered by its remoteness and the corrupt and incompetent Czarist administration, which ran the oil industry as a state monopoly.⁵² The decision to abolish the monopoly system in the early 1870s, however, opened up the area to private enterprise triggering a rapid and significant growth in the oil sector.

A number of British travellers who visited the area at this time drew attention to Baku's oil wealth. Colonel Valentine Baker, for example, who spent several days in the town as part of a 'fact finding' mission to the region noted that Baku had an 'apparently inexhaustible supply of naphtha'⁵³ and a few years later Arthur Arnold wrote that Baku 'has struck oil and before many years are past the world will hear much of this obscure town – this petrolium of Asia.'⁵⁴ By the early 1880s reports of the region's oil wealth were beginning to appear in the national newspapers.⁵⁵ One of the first such articles was written by a Special Correspondent for the *Times*, a Mr. Gallenga, who in November 1881 wrote a lengthy article about the Caucasus noting that:

by whatever means the liquid may be conveyed from Baku to the various seaports and railway stations of the world, it seems likely to effect little less than an economic revolution. There is scarcely any use, domestic or social, that naphtha can be put to. Could the liquid be made to travel so cheaply as to undersell English and other coal in countries like Italy, Spain and other Mediterranean regions... it would be hardly

possible to reckon what enormous wealth would accrue to the people of the Caucasus.⁵⁶

Marvin, who visited the Russian petroleum region in 1883, provided the most comprehensive assessment of the region's economic potential at the time.⁵⁷ He bemoaned England's lack of interest in the region, noting that 'up to the present moment England is the only country that has held aloof from participating in the enterprise.'⁵⁸ He goes on to argue that unless British merchants act quickly the lucrative export of Baku oil will be in the hands of continental rivals. Yet despite his passionate appeal to the British business community it would seem, he noted in an article of 1886, that it had fallen 'dead upon the public ears.'⁵⁹ Although Marvin produced a huge number of articles and papers on the subject (until his premature death in 1890) it was not until 1897 that the first British company, Russian Petroleum and Liquid Fuel Ltd., was established in Baku and even then the level of British investment continued to be relatively low.⁶⁰ Despite this fact British workers were arriving in the oil boom-town, which by the early 1900s accounted for nearly 50% of global oil production and was by far the single most important oil producing centre in the world.⁶¹ The arrival of the British provoked much comment in Moscow. In 1902, for example, the *Moscow News* ran a series of articles highlighting the fact that British workers were ousting Russian workers from their jobs. These articles were translated and discussed in the British press with various commentators highlighting the fact that British workers were better skilled than their Russian counterparts and thus better qualified for the jobs.⁶²

The signing of the Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907 effectively suspended the traditional rivalry between London and St. Petersburg and prompted a rapid increase in the level of British investment in Russia.⁶³ Although it proved difficult to break into the oil industry at Baku, the discovery of new fields in the northern Caucasus in the 1890s and 1900s, notably at Grozny, Maikop and Emba, provided Britain with a chance to break into the Russian oil industry.⁶⁴ By 1910 the London Stock Exchange was in the grips of oil fever, and numerous companies with interests in the Russian oil industry were established.⁶⁵ The level of investment was enormous with Britain accounting for more than 60% of all foreign investment⁶⁶ and British companies holding the dominant position in Grozny (50% of production), Maikop (70% of production), and Emba (90% of production).⁶⁷ Central Asia and the Caucasus had now taken on a new meaning in the eyes of the British government— it was not just a route to India but had gained considerable importance as the source of energy to fuel Britain's industrial development and (as such) had considerable geo-economic importance.

With the outbreak of war across Europe in 1914, the oil fields of the Caucasus, as the most significant source of oil in the wider European region

were of considerable strategic importance.⁶⁸ As a result there was a frantic struggle for control of the region following the Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of the Czarist regime with both the Germans and the Turks seeing it as an opportunity to gain access to much needed petroleum.⁶⁹ Germany began negotiations with revolutionary Russia and in March 1918 the two sides signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty which ended hostilities between Bolshevik Russia and the Central powers.⁷⁰ At the same time Turkey, keen to gain a foothold in the region signed an agreement with the nascent government of the newly independent state of Azerbaijan granting them access to Baku's oil.⁷¹

Military experts in London were extremely concerned that the Germans (or indeed the Turks) would gain access to the 'enormous supplies of liquid fuel which aerial and motor-transport developed during the war required' and promptly dispatched Major General Dunsterville to the region to secure the oil fields for the allies.⁷² On 4th August 1918, 1400 British troops entered the city and managed to hold it for long enough to deny the Central Powers access to much needed crude oil at a critical moment and was an important factor in bringing an end to the war. Although the British were forced out by Turkish forces in early September 1918 within a few weeks they had reoccupied both Baku and the Black Sea port of Batoum under the terms of the Murdos agreement that brought hostilities between Britain and Turkey to an end. Once in control of the city the British took control of the oil fields establishing the British Oil Administration aimed at ensuring supplies for Britain. Such a move was widely applauded by British industrialists in Britain, especially by those who had large investments in the region. Britain's actions were not just to stop their enemies getting oil but were part of a larger strategy to ensure that Britain and her colonies increased their control over oil producing regions. Some months before the British took Baku, for example, there was considerable discussion about the need to secure oil regions in any post-war peace settlement. In July 1918, for example, Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the War Cabinet sent a secret memo to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Eric Geddes, regarding the uncertain future of oil supplies. In it Hankey notes that it was anticipated that the United States would soon be consuming all the oil it produced as well as that of its neighbour Mexico. The USA was the main source of Britain's oil, which had obvious geopolitical implications. Hankey insisted that the retention of the oil-bearing regions in Mesopotamia and Persia in British hands, as well as a proper strategic boundary to cover them, would appear to be a first class British War Aim.' This issue was raised a few days later by Viscount Harcourt who in a statement to the Imperial War Conference drew attention to the huge gap in the petroleum output and demand of the British Empire and its dependence on the United States.⁷³ According to Harcourt, 'The United Kingdom today is dependent on the United States for about 80 per cent of its supplies and it is obvious that the United States have the power to place this country in an

impossible position should they desire to be unfriendly'. In order to ensure that this did not occur he argued that 'every effort must be made now, and in the future, not only to develop existing oilfields in British territories or spheres of influence, but to acquire new fields that will be from the outset in British commercial hands and under British control'. Such sentiments were reiterated by Admiral Sir Edmund Slade who argued that the British government needed to take control of the greatest amount of petroleum they could and that this control must be 'absolute and there must be no foreign interest involved in it in any sort or kind, otherwise we shall see these interests using every means at their disposal, honestly or dishonestly, openly or secretly to hamper the development of British interests' concluding that the British Government should assist and encourage British companies to obtain control of as much oil land in foreign countries as possible.⁷⁴ These arguments are found repeatedly in documents relating to Britain's future role in the Caucasian oil industry.⁷⁵

The importance of oil to the war effort was widely recognised. In a scribbled note attached to a docket sent to the British Delegation by Robert Lansing, one of the US representatives at the Paris Peace Conference, Lord Hardinge notes that the war would have ended two years earlier had the Germans not had access to Romanian oil.⁷⁶ The importance of oil to the allied victory was also noted and Curzon, speaking at a meeting of the Inter-Allied Petroleum Conference⁷⁷ held 10 days after the armistice, stated that 'the allied cause had floated to victory on a wave of oil.'⁷⁸ Given this statement it is not surprising that control of Baku's oil was central to the British strategy, a strategy promoted by a number of influential people of the time.

The need to control oil supplies was not the only issue of concern to the British authorities. The rapid spread of anarchy in Russian Central Asia also caused considerable unease in London with many fearing that it would lead to the spread of 'Bolshevik propaganda and agents in to Persia and Afghanistan' and more importantly provide an opportunity for the Germans and the Turks to 'use the disorder in Central Asia to embarrass our position in India and possibly Mesopotamia.'⁷⁹ In order to counter this possibility, in August 1918, the British sent a small force of men into Trans-Caspian under the command of General Malleson, who fought with the Trans-Caspian government in Ashgabat against the Bolsheviks.⁸⁰

With the general armistice of November 1918 British troops were operating in various parts of the former Russian Empire including North and South Russia, Siberia and throughout the Caucasus and Transcaspia, requiring the government to consider its policy with respect to the region.⁸¹ Finding a consensus, however, proved difficult with various government ministers at loggerheads as to the best course of action particularly in regions that had previously been outside the British sphere of interest. One such area was the Caucasus which was viewed by Curzon as important but considered of

little interest by many of his cabinet colleagues.⁸² For Curzon, the importance of the region was obvious. It could form a buffer of friendly states between Russia and Britain's Indian interests. Britain should therefore maintain a military presence in the region to protect the liberties of the fledgling governments.⁸³ This view was echoed in a secret report produced by the Indian Office in December 1918 which dealt specifically with Russian Central Asia.⁸⁴ In it, it is argued that 'Central Asia should not be in possession of a great military power pursuing imperialistic aims' and as such Central Asia should be isolate and this would require 'a strong and independent Armenia, the elimination of all Turkish influence from Azerbaijan and preferably the internationalisation of Baku'.

Curzon was not entirely without support but many senior political figures were strongly opposed to such an intervention.⁸⁵ Arthur Balfour, for example, was concerned that the gateway to India was getting 'further and further from India' and insisted that Britain would do well to keep out of the region.⁸⁶ But Curzon's fiercest opponent was Winston Churchill, who took charge of the War Office in January 1919, with the task of demobilising the British army and reducing the cost of the post-war military occupations on the public purse. Although Churchill called for the withdrawal of troops from most regions, he argued that Britain should offer Russia any assistance that it could as this was crucial to defeating the Bolsheviks who represented, in his famous phrase, 'the most horrible tyranny and brutality the world has ever seen'.⁸⁷ If, Churchill argued, the Bolsheviks were not crushed they could unite with a demoralised Germany and together these two might link with Japan, creating the 'possibility of a great combination from Yokohama to Cologne in hostility to France, Britain and America.'⁸⁸ Curzon, although anti-Bolshevik, was concerned that if the British supported the White Russians and they were successful in overthrowing the Bolsheviks, there was a possibility that Russia would renew its interests in Britain's Indian Empire.⁸⁹

The British evacuation of the Caucasus and the Transcaspiian became the subject of much discussion in early 1919. In March of that year Curzon chaired an Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs to clarify the situation.⁹⁰ The minutes from the meeting provide a clear indication of the level of disagreement within the cabinet, with Churchill adamant that the British should withdraw from the Caucasus.⁹¹ Some advocated handing the mandate for the region to Italy, whose embittered government had been denied the imperial spoils they coveted in Africa and the Ottoman Empire during the peace negotiations.⁹² There was, however, considerable opposition both in Whitehall and the region itself to such a move. Professor J.Y. Simpson, one of the two Russian experts in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office was concerned about the possibility of a British evacuation. In a memorandum of May 1919, Simpson commented that:

It is not easy to exaggerate either the strategic importance or the wealth of the natural resources of Transcaucasia, whether regarded from a military point of view or as a future great through-way to the east: the country that commands the Caucasus can dominate Central Asia. In this respects its central position makes it more vitally important than either Mesopotamia or the entry into Asia through South Russia north of the Caspian. Already the Americans see the possibility of developing here a great roadway to the wealth of Turkestan and Western China.⁹³

In the event Churchill won the battle of wills and in August 1919 British troops were withdrawn from the Caucasus and Britain increased its support to the leader of the White Russians in the south, General Denekin, on condition that he made no attempt to take the Caucasian states.⁹⁴

Shortly after this event, and following his appointment as British High Commissioner to Southern Russia, Mackinder visited the region he now called the 'heartland' for the first time.⁹⁵ He arrived at the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk on New Year's Day 1920 and spent much of his time on board the British Battleship HMS Malborough, though he briefly visited Tikhoretskaya Junction to meet with General Denekin. In his report submitted in early January 1920, Mackinder provided a general overview of the situation in southern Russia and made a number of recommendations in respect of British policy. 'It is only by strong immediate measures', he argued,

taken before the thawing of the Volga ice, that the advance of Bolshevism, sweeping forward like a prairie fire, can be limited and kept away from India and Lower Asia.... It is therefore essential to regard the Caspian and the Caucasus barrier as part of a larger policy.⁹⁶

By the time Mackinder's report had been received in London the British Government had taken the decision that further support of Denekin was futile. With the collapse of the White Russian Army in southern Russia the Bolsheviks began to gain ground in the region and by mid 1921 the southern Caucasus had fallen to the Soviets and the British no longer had official representation in the region.⁹⁷

British interest in the region did not cease, however, and during the inter-war years British authorities maintained a watching brief on the southern sector of the Soviet Union. In 1927, for example, the RAF flew covert missions across Baku and other parts of the Caucasus as tension mounted between Britain and the Soviet Union.⁹⁸ The fate of these oil fields after the outbreak of World War II was a source of particular concern. The prospect of Soviet oil fields supplying German industry, either through diplomatic arrangement or as a result of military conquest, had been a deeply worrying prospect in

London and Paris for some time, and both countries discussed the potential of bombing the oil installations at Baku and Grozny shortly after the Germans and the Soviets signed the Non-Aggression Pact.⁹⁹ The RAF flew two covert missions in early 1940 to photograph the main oil producing regions of the Caucasus. On 30 March, an unmarked British aircraft spent over an hour photographing Baku and its oil complexes. A second mission was undertaken a week later, this time over Batum on the Black Sea Coast, although on this occasion the plane was spotted and a Soviet fighter attempted to intercept. The perceived need to destroy the oil facilities in Baku and the rest of the Caucasus became more acute following the German invasion of the Soviet Union and plans were submitted by the RAF for the 'Raspberry Operation' which aimed to prevent Caucasus oil products reaching German controlled Europe.¹⁰⁰ Although the Germans managed to secure Emba, their effort to seize the main oil fields of the Caucasus was ultimately thwarted.¹⁰¹

With the end of World War II in 1945 and British rule in India two years later, interest in Central Asia and the Caucasus waned. The western governments kept a watchful eye on the region that formed the southern tier of the Soviet Union but, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 it was seen as little more than an isolate backwater of the Soviet Empire.¹⁰²

CONCLUSION

The views expressed by Mackinder at the RGS in 1904 were a synthesis of long-established and widely held British perspectives on Central Asia and the Caucasus that had circulated in government circles and in the media for several decades. Mackinder's main arguments – that the region was geo-strategically of enormous importance for the security of India, and hence the entire British Empire, and that the development of a regional rail network would allow the vast resource wealth of Central Asia and the Caucasus to be fully developed by the power controlling the region – can be regarded as a powerful combination of existing geo-strategic views and a still emergent geo-economic calculation.

The 1904 paper and the 1919 book-length development of that earlier exposition were both manifestations of that wider transition, but did not stand out as particularly novel or insightful contributions. The larger significance of Mackinder's geo-strategic and geo-economic perspective was, therefore, not immediately obvious in Britain, and paradoxically only acquired the importance we now attach to it during, and in the immediate aftermath of, World War II.

In 1943, nearly two years after the American entry into the war in Europe, Mackinder was invited to re-visit his original ideas by the editors of the American journal *Foreign Affairs*.¹⁰³ This essay was intended as a commentary on the importance of the heartland with Mackinder arguing that

the conclusion is unavoidable that if the Soviet Union emerges from this war as conqueror of Germany, she must rank as the greatest land power on the globe. Moreover, she will be the Power in the strategically strongest defensive position. The heartland is the greatest natural fortress on earth. For the first time in history it is manned by a garrison sufficient both in number and quality.¹⁰⁴

The publication of this article and the rekindled interest in Mackinder's ideas¹⁰⁵ were in retrospect coincident with an inchoate Cold War geopolitics. Although his original ideas evolved between 1904 and 1943, the main contours of his worldview remained remarkably consistent. Their true significance was only clear once the brutal realities the Cold War brought home to the State Department in Washington the force of his original argument and effectively ensured the enduring significance of his 1904 paper. By that time, Britain had been obliged to relinquish its colonial stake in the Indian subcontinent and hence any direct interest in the 'heartland'.

NOTES

1. H. J. Mackinder, 'The Geographical Pivot of History,' *Geographical Journal* 23 (1904) pp. 421–42 (reprinted in full, including the post-lecture discussion, in *Geographical Journal* 170 (2004) pp. 298–321). The ideas developed in 1904 were elaborated after World War I in H. J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction* (London: Constable and Co. 1919). The standard works on Mackinder are B. W. Blouet, *Sir Halford Mackinder: A Biography* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press 1987); W. H. Parker, *Mackinder: Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1982). For different aspects of his career, see G. Kearns, 'Closed space and political practice: Frederick Jackson Turner and Halford Mackinder,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21 (1984) pp. 23–34; Idem., 'Halford John Mackinder, 1861–1947', in T. W. Freeman (Ed.), *Geographers: Bio-bibliographical Studies* Vol. 9 (London: Mansell 1985) pp. 71–86; Idem., 'Fin de Siècle Geopolitics: Mackinder, Hobson and Theories of Global Closure,' in P. J. Taylor (Ed.), *Political Geography of the Twentieth Century: A Global Analysis* (London: Pinter 1993) pp. 9–30; Idem., 'The imperial subject: geography and travel in the work of Mary Kingsley and Halford Mackinder,' *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers*, NS 22 (1997) pp. 450–72; R. Mayhew, 'Halford Mackinder's 'new' political geography and the geographical tradition,' *Political Geography* 19 (2000) pp. 771–91; G. O'Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics* (London: Routledge 1996) pp. 75–110; J. Ryan, 'Visualizing imperial geography: Halford Mackinder and the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee, 1902–1911,' *Ecumene* 1 (1994) pp. 157–76.

2. There are various definitions of Central Asia, none universally accepted. The Soviet definition, for example, refers solely to the region comprising Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Since independence Kazakhstan has also been incorporated into this wider area. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Central Asia was defined in more expansive terms to include, in addition to the above region, central Russia south of the Taiga, Mongolia, northern and western India, Pakistan, north eastern Iran and Afghanistan.

3. See for example W. M. Marshall, *Peter the Great* (London: Longman 1996).

4. From the confidential India Office report, *Historical Summary of the Central Asian Question*, (1874) a copy of which is in the RGS Archives, H. C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

5. Marshall (note 3).

6. After capturing Baku it is reputed that the Czar exclaimed 'I have won the key to the Caspian. Yonder,' pointing towards Asterabad and Herat, 'lies the road to India.' See C. Marvin, 'All bound for Baku,' *The Morning Post* (28 September 1888). After Peter's death in 1725 the territories reverted to Persian control until the early 1800s when they were annexed once again.

7. C. E. Stewart, 'The Herat valley and the Persian border from the Hari-Rud to Sistan,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 8 (1886) pp. 138–153. Stewart read his paper to the evening meeting of the RGS early in 1886. The lecture prompted much discussion particularly on Herat's strategic importance. Sir Henry Rawlinson, for example, commented that he entirely agreed with Stewart's assessment of the importance of Herat, viewed by many in Britain as the key to India.

8. P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991); K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (London: Counterpoint Press 1999).

9. Lord Melbourne, letter to *The Times* (4 April 1878) p. 10.

10. The first Afghan-Anglo War lasted from 1839 to 1842. See J. Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan* (London: Richard Bentley 1851, 2 volumes).

11. A. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy, 1853–56* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1990).

12. See, for example, the India Office report (note 4).

13. Tashkent was annexed by Russia in 1865 followed by Samakhand three years later. The latter proved the key to subjugating Bokhara, and Khiva eventually fell in 1873.

14. The term 'Lawrence School' is used in a Minute by Sir W. R. Mansfield, Commander in Chief of India, dated 1 January 1869. See RGS Archives, H. C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3. The Lawrence School was led by Sir John Lawrence, Viceroy of India, who opposed active interference in the affairs of Afghanistan.

15. During his brief two-year tenure as President of the RGS, Frere wrote a lengthy report on the Central Asian question to Sir John Kaye, subsequently printed and circulated amongst the Members of the Council of India. See letter from Sir Bartle Frere to Sir John Kaye, 12 June 1874, RGS Archives, H. C. Rawlinson Special Collection 20/3.

16. When Disraeli came to power, Lord Northbrook was the Viceroy of India. Northbrook resisted attempts by the government to reverse Lawrence's non-interventionist policy, but eventually resigned rather than accept orders from ministers whose diplomatic judgement he believed to be disastrously distorted by Russophobia. Following Lytton's appointment as Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India asked Frere to prepare a new memorandum for Lytton's consideration on the Central Asian question. Although the memorandum had not arrived by the time Lytton left for India, the two men met and discussed the matter at Suez. Lytton subsequently expressed surprise that his views seemed to coincide exactly with those expressed by Frere. See K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac (note 8) p. 17.

17. *The Times* (23 September 1878) p. 9.

18. Rumours of the Russian delegation's arrival in Kabul appeared in *The Times* in mid August and were confirmed later than month. See *The Times* (15 August 1878) p. 9; (27 August 1878) p. 9. At this time, Russia was once again embroiled in conflict with the Ottoman Empire. In early 1878 the Russia Fleet was ready to attack Constantinople, raising fears in Britain that Russia would have unassailable control of the Black Sea and further her interests on the Near East. Britain duly mobilised its forces to help Turkey. As a diversionary tactic, Russia sent 20,000 troops to the Afghan border and a secret military mission to Kabul. In response to Russia's activities in Afghanistan, Britain launched its second major campaign against the country. See J. Berryman, 'British imperial defence strategy and Russia: the role of the Royal Navy in the Far East, 1878–1898,' *International Journal of Naval History* 2 (2002), http://www.ijnhonline.org/volume1_number1_Apr02/article_berryman_royalnavy_fareast.doc.htm.

19. For Rawlinson's views, see *The Times* (18 November 1878) p. 9; (27 November 1878) p. 9; (26 February 1879) p. 11; (4 March 1879) p. 10; (6 March 1879) p. 6.

20. While Gladstone opposed the Afghan war and ordered the removal of British troops from Afghanistan, Britain continued to dictate the country's foreign policy.

21. H. C. Rawlinson, *Memorandum on the Russo-Persia-Afghan Border*, 27 August 1883, in RGS Archives, H. C. Rawlinson Special Collection HCR 20/3.

22. Charles Marvin was taken to Russia by his father in 1869 when he was 15 years old. There, as is the custom in Russian families with only one son, he was 'adopted' by the family of Colonel Volykoff, the chief body guard of the Empress. Marvin lived with the Volykoff family for nearly five years. See 'Charles Marvin: biographical particulars,' in L. Tracy, *Marvin's Letters to the Morning Post 1888–1890* (Allahabad, 1891).

23. Between 1879 and his death in 1890, Marvin published 25 books and pamphlets and hundreds of newspaper articles, listed in Tracy (note 22).

24. C. Marvin, *The Railway Race to Herat: An Account of the Russian Railway to Herat and India* (London: W. H. Allen and Company 1885).

25. Tracy (note 22) p. 16.
26. Tracy (note 22) p. 10.
27. Marvin, *The Railway Race to Herat* (note 24).
28. C. Marvin, *The Russian Annexation of Merv* (London: John Murray 1884) p. 2.
29. Tracy (note 22) p. 13.
30. Gladstone was forced not only to mobilise British Troops but also to secure a vote for credit of £11 million in anticipation of military defence in India. See Berryman (note 18).
31. Tracy (note 22) p. 16.
32. The Soviet Union and Afghanistan were still discussing boundary agreements over 50 years later, signing two treaties, the first in 1946 and the second in 1958.
33. During the 1890s there was a shift in Russia's strategy to the Far East, signalled by a decision to construct the Trans-Siberian Railway. See Berryman (note 18).
34. J. N. Westward, *A History of Russian Railways* (London: Allen and Unwin 1964) pp. 59–129.
35. Media interest in Russian railway developments was substantial. See the articles in *The Times* (4 April 1879) p. 11; (12 September 1896) p. 5; (25 June 1903) p. 5; (29 December 1903) p. 8. See also, G. N. Curzon, 'The Transcaspian Railway,' *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 9 (1989) pp. 273–295 and A. Krausse, 'The Transcaspian Railway,' *Black and White* (21st January 1899) pp. 74–75.
36. Westward (note 34) pp. 59–129.
37. G. N. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo Russian Question* (London: Longman's, Green and Company 1889).
38. Curzon, 'The Transcaspian Railway,' (note 35) p. 291.
39. *Ibid.* p. 291.
40. *Ibid.* p. 293. Curzon made much of the economic impacts of the Trans-Caspian railway in a lecture that he gave in Newcastle in 1889, a hand written copy of which is available in his personal papers in the Oriental and India Office Collections housed in the British Library (hereafter BL) in London. See BL, India Office, Curzon MSS Eur F111/20.
41. Notes from Sir N. O'Connor to Salisbury, 12 July 1898, and 13 July 1898, in BL, India Office, Curzon MSS F111/28.
42. Lt. Col. McSwiney, 'Summary of information obtained during a recent journey through Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan (confidential),' 12 October 1899, in BL, India Office, Curzon MSS EUR F111/28.
43. McSwiney noted that Colonel Polosov's statement that Russia had no intention of attacking India, but desired only a strong Central Asia that would prevent Britain thwarting Russia's legitimate interests in the Far East. Angus Hamilton, a reporter for the *Indian Daily News* who travelled in Central Asia in the early 1900s, also provided details of the Murghab branch line noting that 'the line itself is veiled in secrecy by the Russian authorities' and that completing it will serve as '[a] military creation of extreme strategic value.' See A. Hamilton, 'The Secret Line: The Murghab Branch,' *Indian Daily News* report, 1902, in BL, India Office, Curzon MSS EUR F111/394.
44. J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan 1883) p. 301.
45. C. Marvin, *The Region of the Eternal Fire: An Account of a Journey to the Petroleum Region of the Caspian in 1883* (London: W. H. Allen and Company 1884) pp. 324–325.
46. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia* (note 37) pp. 398–399.
47. Curzon's personal papers contain many newspaper cuttings from England and India as well as translations from Russian newspapers dating from this period.
48. On hearing the news, a furious Balfour accused Younghusband of dishonouring the country and henceforth took personal control of British policy in Central Asia. See J. Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997) pp. 109–113; C. Allen, *Duel in the Snow: The True Story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa* (London: John Murray 2004) pp. 1–6; P. French, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (London: HarperCollins 1994).
49. Under the Anglo-Russia agreement of 1907, Britain and Russia agreed that Persia would be divided into three zones: the north under Russian sphere of influence, the south under British authority, and the central zone left as a buffer zone. Russia also agreed to renounce her interests in Afghanistan, whose foreign policy would henceforth be directed from London, thereby safeguarding the security of India. Both Russia and Britain were to enjoy equal trading rights in the country. Moreover, Russia and Britain recognised China's suzerainty over Tibet. M. Sargent, *British Involvement in Transcaspia (1918–1919)*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Caucasus Series 2004, April 2002; P. Venier, 'The geographical

pivot of history and early twentieth century geopolitical culture,' *Geographical Journal* 170 (2004) pp. 330–336.

50. R. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* Vol. 2 (Glasgow: Maclehose 1903–1905) pp. 449–479.

51. R. A. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia 1867–1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 1960).

52. D. Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (London: Simon and Schuster 1991) pp. 58–72.

53. V. Baker, *Clouds in the East* (London: Chatto and Windus 1875) p. 351.

54. Arnold, the former editor of *The Echo*, visited Baku in 1875. He was subsequently MP for Salford from 1880 to 1885. See R. A. Arnold, *Through Persia by Caravan* Vol. I (London: Tinsely Brothers 1877) p. 138.

55. See for example, 'The Petroleum Fields of Russia,' *The Times* (31 March 1880) p. 11; 'Oil in Central Asia,' *The Times* (5 July 1882) p. 4; 'The Caucasus Petroleum Region,' *The Times* (14 August 1884) p. 7.

56. 'The Caucasus,' *The Times* (2 November 1881) pp. 4–5.

57. Marvin, *The Region of the Eternal Fire* (note 45).

58. *Ibid.* p. 319.

59. C. Marvin, *The Petroleum Question: The Coming Deluge of Russian Petroleum* (London: R. Anderson and Co. 1896) p. v. Public interest in petroleum was substantial. In one of his many contributions to *The Morning Post*, Marvin estimated with obvious pride that c. 4,000 people turned up to listen to a public lecture he gave on the topic in Newcastle in October 1889. See C. Marvin, 'I work on a Sunday,' *Morning Post* (25 October 1889).

60. *The Times* (17 November 1898) p. 14.

61. H. Hassmann, *Oil in the Soviet Union: History, Geography, Problems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1953).

62. According to a report in *The Times* ('Foreign Labour in the Caucasus,' *The Times* [11 September 1902] p. 3), Russian sources claimed that 8,500 Russian oil workers and their families had been deported from the Baku region to make way for British and other foreign workmen from July 1901 to February 1902.

63. In addition to the Anglo-Russian agreement in Persia (see note 49), the 1907 treaty required Britain and Russia to respect the independence of Afghanistan and to confer with each other on all matters relating to the country. Neither the Afghans nor Persians were consulted on the signing or the outcome of the treaty. See Sargent (note 49).

64. Grozny began to extract oil from shallow wells in 1833, but commercial development did not start until 1893. See R. E. Ebel, 'The History and Politics of Chechan Oil,' *Post-Soviet Prospects* 3/1 (The Center for Strategic and International Studies: Washington D.C. January 1995) p. 1.

65. Of the 55 British registered companies involved in the Russian oil industry, 49 were registered after 1909, the vast majority in the period from 1910 to 1912. The amount of capital each company possessed ranged from as little as £25,000 in the case of the South Caucasian Syndicate, established in 1912 at Naftalan, to £2.5 million in the case of the Russian General Oil Corporation Limited also established in 1912 at Baku. The capital investment of most companies ranged from £400,000 and £600,000. A detailed report of British investments in the Russian oil fields was compiled by the Naval Section of the Royal Navy in February 1919 as part of the intelligence gathering for the Paris Peace Conference. See Foreign Office Report, 'Oils and Minerals of the Caucasus,' in National Archives (hereafter NA) FO 608/230. It is worth noting that just as the British were becoming seriously involved in the Russian oil industry, the Rothschild banking family began to withdraw following a wave of strikes and labour unrest and growing concern about anti-Semitic and anti-foreign sentiment in the region. In 1911, the Rothschild family began negotiations with Royal Dutch/Shell and sold their entire Russian oil business interests the following year. D. Yergin (note 52) pp. 132–133.

66. Ebel (note 64) p. 1.

67. *Ibid.*; Hassmann (note 61).

68. Although oil production in Baku increased sharply between 1900 and 1914, its relative importance declined from over 50% to just 15% of global production in this period.

69. F. Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for the Transcaucasus (1917–1921)* (New York: The Philosophical Library of New York 1951).

70. J. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918* (London: Macmillan 1963).

71. J. Hassanov, 'The struggle for Azerbaijani Oil at the End Of World War I,' *Caspian Crossroads* 2 (1997), <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/246.htm>.

72. See 'Outline of Events in Transcaucasia from the Beginning of the Russian Revolution in the Summer of 1917 to April 1921', in NA FO Doc. 219 E 8378/8378/58.

73. According to Harcourt's statement, the British Empire produced only 2% of global supply, 80% of which came from India. The US, by contrast, accounted for 65% of global output and Russia a further 13%. See NA T1/12395.

74. Ibid.

75. See, for example, NA (note 73); NA FO 371/3666; NA FO 371/3673.

76. NA (note 65).

77. The issue of fuel for military purposes came to the fore in 1917 and resulted in the establishment of the Inter-Allied Petroleum Committee later that year. The group comprised representatives from Britain, France, Italy and the US and met at regular intervals over the subsequent year to discuss fuel requirements, supply and storage. Details of the membership of the committee and the minutes of the meetings can be found in NA POWE 33/8 and NA POWE 33/9.

78. 'Allies Petroleum Tour Across Great Britain,' *Petroleum World* (December 1918) p. 502.

79. BL, India Office, IOR/L/MIL/807.

80. Sargent (note 49) *spi*.

81. M. Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (London: Pimlico 2000) p. 405.

82. D. Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman 1859–1925* (London: John Murray 1994) p. 513.

83. Minutes of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Middle Eastern Affairs, 6 March 1919, in NA FO 371/3661. Beaverbrook describes how Curzon had long been 'dinning into the ears of Ministers' the necessity of keeping troops in Georgia and Azerbaijan, but that some of his colleagues felt that Curzon was merely showing off his ability to pronounce the place names in the region. See W.M.A. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War, 1914–1916* (London: Osbourne 1959), p. 67.

84. See the secret memorandum on 'The future of Russian Central Asia' produced by the Indian Office on 3 December 1918, in NA FO 371/4352/PC 78.

85. A notable supporter of Curzon was Professor J. Y Simpson, one of the Russian experts employed by the Political Intelligence Department (PID) at the Foreign Office which had been established in March 1918 as part of Britain's aim to ensure that it secured as much as possible from the peace process that would inevitably follow the cessation of war. See E. Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916–1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991).

86. R. F. Mackay, *Balfour: Intellectual Statesman* (Oxford: OUP 1985).

87. Gilmour (note 82) p. 514.

88. NA, Minutes, WC 531, 12 February 1919. This was precisely the argument developed by leading German geopolitical theorists such as Karl Haushofer (who influenced both Rudolf Hess and Joachim von Ribbentrop) who repeatedly advocated an alliance with Russia and Japan creating a 'Eurasian great continental bloc' that would eventually challenge and overwhelm the British Empire. See H. Weigert, *Generals and Geographers: The Twilight of Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1942).

89. Gilmour (note 82) p. 514.

90. The meeting was chaired by Curzon and was attended by Sir Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War, as well as representatives from Admiralty, the War Office, the India Office, the Foreign Office and the Treasury. See NA (note 83).

91. Italy initially agreed to replace Britain in Transcaucasia but following the collapse of Vittorio Orlando's government, the new regime in Rome reneged on this commitment. See the Foreign Office Report (note 72). See also M. Macmillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World*, (London: John Murray 2001) p. 452.

92. In his memorandum on the British evacuation of the Caucasus, Professor Simpson was highly critical of the plan, noting that the Italian colonial record was one of persistent failure and selfish exploitation. See NA (note 83).

93. Ibid.

94. NA (note 72).

95. Curzon to Mackinder 6 December 1919, NA T 1/12577.

96. Report on the situation in South Russia by Sir H. Mackinder M.P., in NA FO 800/251.

97. NA (note 72).

98. P. R. Osborn, *Operation Pike: Britain Versus the Soviet Union, 1939–1941*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 2000).

99. Ibid.
100. Outline plan for the denial of Russian oil to German controlled Europe by air attack, in NA AIR/23/960.
101. Yergin (note 52) p. 336.
102. S. L. O'Hara, 'Great Game or Grubby Game? The struggle for control of the Caspian,' *Geopolitics* 9 (2004) 138–160.
103. M. J. Mackinder, 'The Round World and the Winning of the Peace,' *Foreign Affairs* 21 (1943) pp. 595–605. Mackinder's *Democratic Ideas and Realities* was also republished in the US in 1942 by Henry Holt and Company.
104. Mackinder, 'The round world,' (note 103) p. 601.
105. G. O Tuathail, 'Introduction, Imperialist geopolitics,' in G. O Tuathail, S. Dalby and P. Routledge (Eds), *The Geopolitics Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) p. 25.