
PECULIARITIES OF THE RUSSIAN-AFGHAN EMBASSY RELATIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY IN THE CASE OF THE AMBASSADOR N.G. STOLETOV

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ABSTRACT: The second half of the 19th century was a pivotal period for Russian-Afghan relations, marked by complex diplomatic engagements and geopolitical maneuvers. A key figure during this era was Ambassador N.G. Stoletov, whose mission to Afghanistan in 1878 exemplified the intricate dynamics between the two nations. Stoletov's embassy played a crucial role in shaping Russia's influence in Central Asia, navigating the challenges posed by British interests in the region. This article explores the peculiarities of Russian-Afghan diplomatic relations during Stoletov's tenure, analyzing his strategies, the outcomes of his negotiations, and their long-term implications for Russian foreign policy. By examining the historical context and Stoletov's diplomatic efforts, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the broader geopolitical landscape in which these relations were situated.

KEYWORDS: Russian-Afghan Relations, N.G. Stoletov, 19th Century Diplomacy, Central Asia, Geopolitics, Russian Foreign Policy, British-Russian Rivalry, Great Game.

INTRODUCTION

It is known that since the 60s of the 19th century, fundamental changes have taken place in the diplomatic relations of the Russian Empire with the regions of Central Asia. This caused peculiarities in diplomatic relations. Ambassador N.G. Stoletov is of special importance in the diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. The visit of the Russian embassy to Bukhara and Afghanistan in 1878-1879. Information provided based on the diaries of the embassy member I.Yavorsky. According to these reports, the composition of the embassy was as follows:

1. Head of mission - Major General N.G. Stoletov;
2. Assistant to the Head of the Embassy - Colonel N.O. Razgonov;
3. Topographer N.A. Bendersky for the embassy group;
4. Translator, Persian language specialist Nazirov;
5. Zamonbek Shihalibekov, translator from Turkish;

There were also several other members of the mission, one of whom was Malevinsky, designated as the mission commander, who was considered an expert in Western European languages, especially English. A special doctor was attached to the embassy group, and he was the author of these stories, I.Yavorsky .

The important point is that there are common features of almost all embassies of the Russian Empire that visited Central Asia. In other words, the head of the mission, his assistant, doctor,

translator, topographer, cartographer are involved in every embassy. The composition of the embassy group of N.G. Stoletov mentioned above was no exception. In addition, another characteristic of the embassy of this period was that a small military unit protecting the embassy group had to accompany the group. The main goal was, of course, to ensure the safety of the members of the embassy group. a group of 22 soldiers from the Ural and Orenburg Cossacks joined this embassy.

The importance of this embassy mission was very high in the diplomatic relations between the Russian Empire and Afghanistan. Several reasons contributed to this. First of all. It was natural that in the 70s and 80s of the 19th century, the rivalry between the British and the British in the issue of Central Asia reached a completely new level, and, moreover, the important processes taking place in the international geopolitical arena would affect the views of both sides on the issue of Central Asia.

When talking about the importance of the embassy, it is necessary to emphasize the attitude of the Kabul government to this embassy. According to diplomatic etiquette, the host country uses several ways to show its respect to the ambassador. One of these can be seen in the reception or, in other words, the reception of the embassy. The fact is that the emir of Afghanistan, Sheralikhan, attached special importance to the reception of the embassy headed by N.G. Stoletov. In addition to accompanying the Russian ambassadors who entered the border of Afghanistan, Amir Sheralikhan also sent the officials of Kabul to meet the ambassadors.

A vivid example of this is that when the embassy group reached the village of Jalriz, they were informed that they would soon meet with Serdar Abdullah Khan, who was sent by the official representative of the Kabul government, Sherali Khan. Serdar Abdullakhan was one of the most experienced officials of Kabul, he was around 70 years old. This process also shows us that the Afghan government pays serious attention to relations with Russia and tries to welcome them properly.

The meeting with Sedar will take place in a special tent. Although specific issues were not discussed at this meeting, the representative of Kabul informed the ambassadors that in the next direction, they will have an official meeting with the official representative of the Afghan government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Wazir Shah Mohammad Khan. The conclusion is that the Kabul government will send high-ranking officials to meet the ambassadors in stages to meet the embassy team, that is, as they get closer to Kabul .

Several unique methods were used in the process of diplomatic relations between the governments of Kabul and St. Petersburg. For example, when the members of the Embassy group were moving through the Maidan area, Serdar Abdulla came to the ambassadors' tent late one day and said that he wanted to play chess with the doctor of the group, I. Yavorsky. A member of the Russian embassy team respectfully accepts this offer. Despite the fact that the Russian representative has a chance to win during the game, he makes several concessions. Later, conversations about political realities begin. In this process, Serdar Abdullakhan talks about the relations between Afghanistan and the Russian Empire in his youth. He was not able to be as close as necessary in relations with Russia, the ruler of Afghanistan at that time, Dost Muhammad Khan, because even Russia could not provide all the necessary support for Afghanistan at that time.

Sherali Khan, the son of Dost Muhammad Khan, says that he is interested in establishing friendly relations with the Russian Empire today. We can also learn from these processes that, first of all, in mutual diplomatic relations, specific diplomatic methods are an integral part of the relations between the two countries.

Secondly, during these embassy actions, the Afghan government tried to show that it wants to enter a new stage of relations with the Russian government in every way. Continuing his thoughts, Serdar Abdulla Khan said that today's ruler Sherali Khan sees this embassy group as representatives of peace and friendship, and he is inviting them to his residence in Kabul.

In this way, the ambassadors continue to move towards Kabul. One of the last areas on the Kabul route is called Arkhangil Valley. When they reach this area, the next official representatives of Kabul will meet the embassy group. These official representatives are headed by the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, and they express their respects with warm words, which are considered important in the next stage of the diplomatic relationship. This meeting also reveals some subtle aspects of diplomatic relations between the two countries. For example, after mutual greetings, the members of the Russian embassy group will settle in the cabins where the Kabul officials arrived. Significantly, the Kabul officials arrived on 3 elephants and several horses. At that time, it was considered customary for important political figures to travel on elephants. The head of the embassy group, N. Stoletov, together with the Afghan minister, will start moving in the same elephant. It also meant a lot politically. That is, it was not difficult to understand that the Afghan minister inviting the head of the embassy to his elephant is first of all a symbol of respect, and also a foundation for the establishment of friendly relations between these two representatives.

This embassy mission reveals many aspects of Russian-Afghan relations. One such aspect shows that the shape of embassy relations depends not only on the political situation between two countries or in Central Asia, but also on international relations. That is, relations between the Russian Empire and Afghanistan were established against the background of international relations and geopolitical processes.

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