

The Russian Railways and Imperial Intersections in the Russian Empire

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Introduction

The history of railroads in late Tsarist Russia contains a still largely untold yet significant story of empire. Empires in World History by Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper is a comprehensive history of empires in global history. One of its greatest contributions to the study of empire is the articulation of important themes of empire. Imperial intersections are one of the themes that is very important to the study of Russian railroads. Imperial intersections refer to the relationships between empires and their international relations. This study will focus on the confluence of Russian railroad development and its role in Russia's imperial intersections. It will focus on the construction of Russian railways as a locus point of imperial intersections between France and the Russian Empire and illustrate the profundity they can have. The Russian railways serve as a locus point for Russian industrialization, finance, international relations, military preparedness, top level government decision making with French military planning, security, financial interests, and international prestige. This case study is an attempt to illustrate the extent to which international relations between empires and their domestic policies were interconnected by the last half of the nineteenth century up until the outbreak of the First World War.

Economic policy, military ability, and other internal policies are often studied in isolation from one another or from the international relations and positions of empires. Scholarly works focusing on the Russian Empire often have focused on Russian railways, Russian economic development, the Russian military, or Russian foreign policy in relative isolation from one another. This exploration and treatment of the Russian railways is an attempt to illustrate how the Russian railways functioned as an intersection point for important aspects of Russia's

internal affairs, the Russian Empire's international relations, and also how the railways became intertwined with the international position and security of France. This case study illustrates how intertwined, deeply connected, and dependent domestic policies could become with international relationships between empires in the decades before the First World War.

In *Empires in World History*, Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper provide an explanation of “imperial intersections” which will be explored in this study. They state that, “Empires did not act alone. Relationships *among* empires were critical to their politics and to their subjects’ possibilities.”¹ The authors also write, “The intersection of empires provoked competition, imitation and innovation...”² This explanation briefly cites a few examples of imperial intersections. First the authors discuss large, powerful empires whose elites felt they had no rivals, only nuisances on the border. Second, they discuss examples of fledgling empires that managed to enhance their position by exploiting distant peripheral regions of larger empires or being allowed to grow due to distant proximity to larger, expansionist powers. Third, they mention successor empires that arose from the fragmentation of larger dominant empires. An important aspect of these successor empires is that no single power ever won the contest to replace their predecessors. Finally the authors write, “Rivalry among a small number of empires, each with resources beyond any one nation, drove the history of the twentieth century...”³ This rivalry of empires is the setting for the Russian Empire in the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper are the first known to this author to identify this term but, it is still relatively unexplored and in need of clarification. The term is useful because it can

¹ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton, 2010), 14.

² Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 14-15.

³ *Ibid.* 15

explain relations between relatively evenly matched empires. Unlike other terms, such as “imperialism”, imperial intersections can describe relationships between empires that do not entail relative dominance or hegemony of one power over another. Imperial intersections can describe alliances between empires. However, Cooper and Burbank’s brief treatment of imperial intersections leaves important aspects unexplored. It does not address the interconnectivity and even interdependence that imperial intersections could create between empires. What does co-dependence of empires mean for the internal configurations of empire within each respective empire? Finally, what differentiates imperial intersections or relationships between empires from relationships between non-empires. This thesis will attempt to further explore the idea of imperial intersections and address these questions through the case study of railroads in the Russian Empire and the Franco-Russian Alliance.

In the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century the Russian Empire was motivated by increasing imperial competition to undertake the rapid construction of railways. Railroad construction in the Russian Empire became a significant issue in its imperial intersections and they would in turn significantly influence railroad construction in the Russian Empire.

Empires in World History describes some examples of competition, imitation, and innovation entailed in the imperial intersections of the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Cooper and Burbank write that in imperial competition economic power was vital to sustaining imperial control and expanding it but, that the industrialization of Russia required resources beyond that which Russia could muster on its own.⁴ They write that the Russian Finance Minister Count Sergei Witte's strategy for industrializing Russia was to make Russia a single, integrated economic space. He did this by aggressively building railroads to

⁴ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 331-332.

integrate the empire and support industrialization but required massive funds from abroad – namely France.⁵

The construction of railroads in the Russian Empire would converge with its international political alignment in the last decades leading up to the First World War. Cooper and Burbank describe how frustration at German economic prowess and competition from Austria in the Balkans motivated Russian statesmen to gravitate towards an alliance with France.⁶ This alliance was primarily a military alliance but was also inspired by and further reinforced by their financial relationship. Relevant to this study is that the military and financial relationship between the Russian Empire and the French Third Republic converged to internationalize Russian railroad construction projects and, hence not an insignificant portion of the Russian industrial economy.

In 1894 the French and Russian government entered into a military alliance that bound the Russian Empire to military mobilization commitments dependent upon an adequate railway network. This also bound the success of French military planning, and its confidence in the international arena of European Great Power politics to Russian railways. The financial relationship between the two empires solidified at the end of the 1880s when the French market became the overwhelming primary source for foreign loans to fuel Russian industrialization and railroad construction. The financial relationship contributed to the signing of the Franco-Russian Alliance and French financial leverage even persuaded Russia to accept treaty provisions that it initially resisted. The French Third Republic exploited the financial dependence of Russia combined with treaty stipulations to influence it to construct purely strategic rail lines. These lines had limited economic value for Russia but, served to augment the security and international

⁵*Ibid.*, 356.

⁶*Ibid.*

position of France. This French influence was of unusual significance in the case of the Russian Empire because of the unique importance and central role Russian railroad construction played in its industrialization drive. This thesis seeks to illustrate the extent to which imperial intersections and international considerations influenced the construction of railroads in the Russian Empire.

This case study is not mentioned within Empires in World History but, is an illuminating study of the extent and importance of imperial intersections in the competition between empires in the decades preceding the First World War. This case however is not just absent from Empires in World History. Treatments of Russian railroad construction in terms of empire are rarely and inadequately undertaken. Several case studies of railroads in various polities have illustrated the profound significance of railroad construction.⁷ These studies portray the importance of railroads in states and the development of nations and sometimes even empire. Dennis E. Showalter's Railroads and Rifles illustrates the importance of railroads to Germany's victory in its war against France in 1870 and the unification of Germany.⁸ The studies of Russian railroads encountered by this author do not treat them in terms of empire and studies of empire do not explore the role of Russian railways in adequate depth. Typically studies of Russian railroads are recitations of facts with little interpretation of their broader significance beyond the economic

⁷ See: Albert Schram, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge:Cambridge, 1997)., A. Kim Clark, *The Redemptive Work: Railway and Nation in Ecuador, 1895 – 1930* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1998)., Dennis E. Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany* (Hamden:Archon Books, 1975), M. A. Rao, *Indian Railways* (New Dehli: National Book Trust, 1975), Robert F. Leggert, *Railways of Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1973)., Ian J. Kerr, *Railways in Modern India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.), Roopa Srinivasan, Manish Tiwari and Sandeep Silas, *Our Indian Railway: Themes in India's Railway History* (New Dehli: Cambridge House, 2006).

⁸Dennis E. Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany* (Hamden:Archon Books, 1975)

sphere. Furthermore, the study of Russian railroads is dominated by studies of railroad construction in the Soviet Union.⁹

Railway Imperialism is a collection of articles that is an exception and attempts to discuss railroads in terms of empire. This collection however limits its treatments of railroads and empire to efforts of imperialism and expansion.¹⁰ In this collection there is work that treats the Russian Empire and the Chinese Eastern Railway. This work deals with the CER as a means of furthering Russian imperialistic aims and expansion in China. Railway Imperialism does not discuss the construction of Russian railways in the broader terms of global imperial rivalry. Rather, it is limited to imperial expansion at the expense of China. The 1973 article *The Franco-Russian Alliance and the Russian Railways, 1891-1894* discusses French influence in the Russian Empire but does not discuss it in terms of empire or explore its broader significance to the Russian Empire and its imperial intersections.¹¹ This study will build upon this article while positioning itself within the study of empire, specifically imperial intersections in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century explored in Empires in World History.

The first railway in the Russian Empire, the Tsarskoe-Selo line, was opened in 1837. It punctuated a debate in the 1830s to determine if railroads should be pursued by the Russian Empire. Nicholas I, who first brought railways to the Russian Empire, established a precedent of governmental concern and control of railway construction. In 1842, Nicholas I gave control of a

⁹ See: E. A. Rees, *Stalinism and Soviet Rail Transport* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995)., J.N. Westwood, *Soviet Railways Today* (New York: Citadel Press, 1964)., Anthony Heywood, *Modernising Lenin's Russia: Economic Reconstruction, Foreign Trade, and the Railways* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1999)., J. N. Westwood, *A History of Russian Railways*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964)., Richard Mowbray Haywood, *The Beginnings of Railway Development in Russia in the Reign of Nicholas I, 1835 – 1842*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969)., Richard Mowbray Haywood, *Russia Enters the Railway Age, 1842 – 1855* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Clarence B. Davis and Kenneth E. Wilburn, JR. with Ronald E. Robinson *Railway Imperialism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991)

¹¹ D. N. Collins. "The Franco-Russian Alliance and Russian Railways 1891-1914," *The Historical Journal*, XVI, 4 (1973), 777-778.

major railway project to the Russian Treasury, created the Department of Railways and brought the Moscow-St. Petersburg line into being by decree. Nicholas I also established the precedent of utilizing foreign railway expertise to improve the domestic manufacturing capabilities as opposed to importing completed foreign goods. After the death of Nicholas I, Russia embarked upon a period of experimentation with private railway enterprises under Alexander II. The Crimean War from 1853-1856 halted railway construction in the Russian Empire, and ended the first period of railway construction in the Russian Empire.

The second period of railway construction was boom in railway construction in the Russian Empire from the 1860s into the first decades of the twentieth century. Experiments in private railways came to an end in 1878 after the poor performance of private lines in mobilizing troops during the war with Turkey. The Russian government began purchasing private railways and was much more hesitant to approve private railway projects. Railway construction lull in the 1880s but, the 1890s saw the most rapid period of railway construction.

The upswing of the 1890s consisted of state sponsored railway construction pursued by Alexander III and masterminded by Finance Minister Sergei Witte. Witte used railway construction to fuel a massive industrialization drive in the Russian Empire. The Trans-Siberian Railway was the center piece of this railway drive. The first lines into the Far East were completed in the 1880s but, construction of lines into Siberia and Central Asia exploded in the 1890s. The 1890s also saw an explosion in rail lines in European Russia. The boom of the 1890s ended with the economic crisis of 1901.

Railway construction in the twentieth century did not match that of the 1890s but, was not unremarkable. Construction was interrupted again in 1905 by the Russo-Japanese War and the subsequent domestic upheaval but, again resumed until the outbreak of the First World War.

The Tashkent-Orenburg line completed in 1906, and a series of broad proposals for improvements to the railway network also became the subject of foreign influence. France exerted influence in the proposals for these railways. These are significant and, will be treated in greater detail in this study.

Railroads in the Russian Empire played an important part in its internal affairs. The railroads were influential as a lynchpin of the development of the industrial economy. The construction of railroads allowed the movement of resources over the vast expanses of Russia and the demands of the large scale railroad construction in the immense Russian empire facilitated the development of industries such as rolling stock production, locomotive construction, railroad track construction, mining and metallurgy. The railroads were the seeds from which the industrial economy and abilities of the Russian Empire grew.

The railroads also played a central role in the military capabilities of the Russian Empire and in turn became a factor in the empire's international position. The defeat of France by Germany in 1870-71 illustrated to all the powers of Europe the necessity of railroads in effective and rapid military mobilization. The Great Powers of Europe began an arms race of railway construction and mobilization timetables to enhance the rapidity of general military mobilization.¹² The French were well aware of this reality. For this reason, protocols and timetables for mobilization requiring railways would be a prominent concern for the French in the handful of treaties signed between it and the Russian Empire before the outbreak of the Great War. Railway construction in the Russian Empire both underpinned its industrial economic development, was central to its military effectiveness and consequently its status in the international arena of Great Power competition.

¹² A. J. P. Taylor, "War by Time Table?: The Railway Race Before 1914," *Past and Present* 162 (1999).

A third, very important aspect of Russia's railroad construction is that the undertaking required vast resources that were beyond what the empire could muster on its own. The Russian Empire was starved for capital to finance its epic railroad endeavors. To finance its railroads the Russian Empire floated numerous, large loans on foreign markets and consequently quickly accumulated large amounts of foreign debt. Foreign involvement and investment were significant factors in the construction of railroads in the Russian Empire from the last quarter of the nineteenth century up until June 1914.

The final aspect of Russian railroad construction that ties the convergence of economic, military importance and foreign involvement is the international position of Russia at the beginning of the 1880's. In the 1882 the Triple Alliance signed between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, left the Russian Empire's international position vulnerable. France was also diplomatically isolated after its war with Germany in 1870-71. The two powers were drawn together and entered into an alliance to counter balance the Triple Alliance. France expressed significant interest in the mobilization abilities of the Russian Empire. This included the construction of strategic lines for military purposes. France would use her financial leverage with Russia to influence her to build strategic and economically worthless railways that served to bolster Russia's mobilization abilities and also benefit France in the competition of empires.

This study focuses on the governmental, international, political, and economic configurations at the highest levels of the Russian Empire. This focus was chosen because it seems important to first establish a picture of the broader aspects of imperial intersections involving the Russian railroads. This study serves to develop the spinal cord of these intersections allowing for later studies of how specific people groups within the Russian Empire were impacted by the railways and discuss it in terms of imperial intersections and imperial

relationships. It seems appropriate to begin with the skeleton rather than specific organs in this study. The primary sources used in this these consist of memoirs of Russian statesmen involved in the negotiations and French diplomatic documents. The secondarysources used focus on Russian railways, economic development, and studies of empire.

This study has a few goals for its contribution to the study of empire and to the study of the Russian history. This study is intended to expand upon the theme of “imperial intersections” outlined in Empires in World History. “Imperial intersections” is a term that describes the relationships between empires on relatively equal footing. This is a distinction other studies of empire do not make. The confluence of Russian railway construction with Russia’s relationship with France hopefully will expand upon and illustrate the complexity of imperial intersections, something not explored in depth in Empires in World History.

This study also hopes to contribute to an understanding of the significance of the Russian railways to multiple aspects of the Russian Empire. The Russian Railways did more than connect far flung peripheries in the empire. The construction of the Russian railways became the confluence of several important issues of the Russian Empire. The construction of the Russian railways underpinned Russia’s industrialization drive, became a central concern at the highest levels government, contributed significantly towards the accumulation of the highest foreign debt in the world by the end of the nineteenth century, became vital to Russia’s military effectiveness and, became an important issue in Russia’s foreign relations with France. For France the Russian railways would become critical to her foreign policy, and military plans. France would even exert its influence to persuade the Russian government to build rail lines that furthered French goals. This thesis will demonstrate that Russian railroads became intertwined in several important issues of state in Russia, and also security concerns of France.

This study will be divided into five chapters. Chapter one will be a brief discussion of definitions of empire and configurations of empire specific to the Russian Empire. It will emphasize that the concept of imperial intersections is the only adequate term to characterize the relationship between France and Russia regarding the latter's railways. Chapter two will present a history of Russian railroad development, in the context of economic development in the decades before the First World War. It will demonstrate the overwhelming importance of Russian industrialization to the construction of railways. This chapter will discuss a history of transportation infrastructure in Russia, the history and characteristics of its railway construction, and the importance thereof to the empire. Chapter three will discuss the formation of the Franco-Russian Alliance, the origins of its financial relationship with the Russian Empire, and how they converged to provide France the political mechanism to influence Russian railway construction. Chapter four will discuss examples of French influence in the construction purely strategic railways in Russia. The case study will focus on the Tashkent-Orenburg railway, and subsequent upgrades insisted on by the French after the Russo-Japanese War. Chapters three and four will draw upon diplomatic documents, memoirs and several secondary sources. Chapter 5 will present conclusions followed by additional opportunities for further study of Russian railways and their role in empire.

Empire, Imperialism, Imperial Intersections and, Empire in Russia

Before analyzing the French influence in the construction of Russian railroads an exploration of empire is necessary. This chapter will explore three aspects of empire critical for contextualizing this study. First, it is important to discuss what is meant by empire and imperialism, and to explain why the differences between the two are important to this study. Second, the processes of empire, especially those discussed in Empires in World History, will be explored. The idea of 'imperial intersections' outlined in this chapter will provide a useful lens for thinking about the relationship between France and Russia and its influence on the construction of Russian railways that is overlooked by several explanations of empire and imperialism. Finally, discussing empire and its configurations specific to the Russian Empire will add further contextualization that will illustrate the significance of Russian railways for empire in Russia and the significance of the imperial intersection of the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire in Russia's railway construction.

In Empires in World History Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper present a definition of empires. They explain that,

“Empires are large political units, expansionist or with a memory extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people. The nation-state proclaims the commonality of its people – even if the reality is more complicated – while the empire – state declares the non-equivalence of multiple populations.... The concept of empire presumes that different peoples within the polity will be governed differently.... ”¹³

The authors also explain empire in relation to other state-forms: “Empires, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, as in the sixteenth, existed in relation to each other.” Empires not only exist in relation to each other but in relation to other state forms as well. Empire is clearly distinguished

¹³Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton, 2010), 7- 8.

from kingdoms, city–states, tribes, nation–states, federations and confederacies. They also emphasize that even though empire has persisted for ages it has not remained uniform.¹⁴ It is important to remember that empire changes through time and varies by region. Empires in World History also identifies five themes of empire: 1.) difference within empire; 2.) imperial intermediaries; 3.) imperial intersection: imitation, conflict, transformation ; 4.) imperial imaginaries; and 5.) repertoires of empire.¹⁵ Imperial intersections will be central to this study because it explains, more precisely, than explanations of empire and imperialism, influential interactions, in this case railway construction and alliances, between still formidable empires.

There are several definitions of empire and imperialism the reader should keep in mind. It is important not to have a constrictive definition of empire but, be aware of the multitude of imperial possibilities and trajectories throughout history. What follows are some of the most compelling or influential discussions of empire and imperialism. In Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals, Dominic Lieven presents a discussion of empire that also illustrates the fluidity of empire and varying meanings the term empire has had over time. Lieven explains that that the term empire has shifted meanings in the several millennia in which empires have existed. The word 'empire' is, unfortunately, highly charged and today carries implications of oppression, tyranny, exploitation, and illegitimacy in popular discourse. But, it has not always carried such stigma and did not acquire such universal condemnation until the second half of the twentieth century. Before then 'empire' received widespread approval and was proudly self-proclaimed by governments as a source of legitimacy. In fact, the word can be traced back to the Latin word *imperium* which emphasized legitimacy and authority.¹⁶

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 11.

¹⁶ Dominic Lieven, *Empire, The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (Great Britain: John Murray, 2000), 3-4.

Lieven also states that it was not until the second half of the twentieth century with decolonization that the term returned to the purview of historians.¹⁷ He divides the study of empires into two schools of thought. The first is based on colonial maritime powers and the relationship between a metropolitan core and a periphery and is viewed in terms of exploitation and cultural aggression. The second school of thought focuses on contiguous land empires that exert military dominance with absolutist rule.¹⁸ The second is clearly more relevant to the Russian Empire

Alexander Motyl has presented in depth structural explorations and definitions of empire. It should also be noted that his definitions significantly downplay the significance of ethnic diversity and multiculturalism within empires, stating that all forms of states are this way.¹⁹ Alexander Motyl's definitions of empire are perhaps overly structural, overly emphasize economic patterns and, are somewhat limiting but, despite their rigidity they are still quite useful to keep in mind. Motyl defines empire as,

“...a hierarchically organized political system with a hublike structure – a rimless wheel – within which a core elite and state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channeling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery.”²⁰

Motyl describes three defining features of empire, “... (1) a distinct core elite and a distinct peripheral elite; (2) a distinct core population and a distinct peripheral population; and (3) a

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Dominic Lieven, *Empire: Russia and Its Enemies*, 25.

¹⁹ Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia Press, 2001),

1.

²⁰ Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 4.

dictatorial relationship between the core elite and the peripheral elite.”²¹ According to Motyl, this relationship between core and periphery is the identifying and defining feature of empire.²²

Motyl specifies additional requirements of imperial relationships. In an empire there can be only one core in a relationship of dominance with at least two peripheries.²³ In the rimless wheel of empire, the core serves as the intermediary between its peripheries – in an empire there are no significant periphery to periphery relationships.²⁴ In empires, the core channels resources from the periphery to the core and then back to the periphery. States that drop below the minimum amount of peripheries, allowing significant periphery to periphery relations, and deviate from this pattern of resource flow, effectively cease to be empires.²⁵ Motyl also states that there is no reason why some of these characteristics cannot appear, disappear or reappear and that entities possessing them can gain or lose the classification of empire.²⁶

Motyl draws upon the explanations of earlier scholars and establishes illuminating and useful characteristics of cores. According to Motyl the organizations that exist in the core must be,

“...(1) political, economic and socio-cultural organizations; (2) located in a bounded geographic space (territorially contracted); (3) supportive of one another (mutually reinforcing), and (4) endowed with significant decision making authority.... In sum, a core is a multidimensional set of territorially concentrated and mutually reinforcing organizations exercising highly centralized authority in a state.”²⁷

The core elites in an empire also, “craft foreign policy, control the armed forces, regulate the economy, process information, maintain law, and order, extract resources, pass legislation and

²¹ Alexander J. Motyl, “Thinking about Empire,” in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 22.

²² Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 15.

²³ Motyl, *Thinking about Empire*, 20.

²⁴ Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 21.

²⁶ Alexander Motyl, *Thinking about Empire*, 23.

²⁷ Motyl, *Thinking about Empire*, 20.

oversee borders.”²⁸ They should also print money, direct the finances of the peripheries; appoint peripheral governors or prefects; and they are not accountable, or influenced by the periphery.²⁹

Other definitions of empire also emphasize the importance of the relationship between cores and peripheries. Charles Tilly defines empire as,

“...a large composite polity linked to a central power by indirect rule. The central power exercises some military and fiscal control in each major segment of its imperial domain, but tolerates the two major elements of indirect rule: (1) retention or establishment or particular, distinct compacts for the government of each segment; and (2) exercise of power through intermediaries who enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains in return for the delivery of compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the center.”³⁰

Michael Doyle also emphasizes this dichotomy. He says that,

“Empire... is a system of interaction between two political entities, one of which, the dominant metropole, exerts political control over the internal and external policy – the effective sovereignty of the, subordinate periphery. To understand this interaction it is quite necessary to explain the weakness of the periphery as it is to explain the strength and motives of the metropole.”³¹

This menagerie of definitions of empire may seem excessive but it is necessary when studying empire to keep a plethora of possibilities concerning empire at the ready. These definitions have been presented in order to illustrate the potential possibilities of empire when considering the impacts of railroad construction. The definitions of empire have commonalities: the identification of a core of power that exerts control over peripheries; the claim that empire can be distinguished as a form of rule over diverse peoples and regions: and - the assertion that empire changes.

Another important aspect in the study of empire is that it is not coterminous with imperialism and empire and imperialism can be distinguished from one another. As mentioned

²⁸ Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 11.

²⁹ Motyl, *Thinking about Empire*, 20.

³⁰ Charles Tilly, “How Empires End,” in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 4.

³¹ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1986), 12.

in the previous chapter, the collection of articles in Railway Imperialism is the closest to a discussion of railways in the Russian Empire in terms of empire. Railway Imperialism is a collection of articles that attempts to analyze the development of railways in several different cases in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in terms of European imperialism. One of the editors introduces the collection with a discussion of imperialism as it relates to railways. Unfortunately, imperialism is treated with limited depth and, is almost interchangeable with European expansion and does not explore the concept of empire.³² “Railway imperialism” is described as a form of informal empire which the author explains as economic or indirect influence that European powers exerted on agrarian economies through bank loans which these pre-industrial countries required to finance their railway projects.³³ Railway Imperialism is a good starting point but, neither discusses empire nor distinguishes it from imperialism.

Robinson in the introduction to Railway Imperialism describes imperialism as a strategy of expansionist policy and domination. Imperialism has consistently been described as expansionist policy. In 1917 Lenin described imperialism as the highest form of capitalism. Lenin emphasized the expansionist nature of imperialism and described it as the expansion of capitalists into new markets on the march towards monopoly.³⁴ Earlier, in 1902 John Hobson also described imperialism as a policy of expansion which was driven by financiers.³⁵ In these works empire and imperialism were packaged together connote international economic expansion. The previously mentioned scholars also similarly defined imperialism while also separating it from empire. Alexander Motyl differentiates between empire and imperialism by

³² Ronald E. Robinson, “Introduction: Railway Imperialism,” in *Railway Imperialism*, ed. Clarence B. Davis et al. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991) 1.

³³ Robinson, “Introduction: Railway Imperialism,” 2-3.

³⁴ Vladimir Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975).

³⁵ Doyle, *Empires*, 23.

stating that empire is a polity and imperialism is a policy.³⁶ Michael Doyle identifies two types of imperialism, formal and informal. Formal imperialism involves direct military intervention or annexation of a territory. Informal empire involves the indirect control of a region through economic, financial and other indirect means of influence.³⁷

Imperialism is not a sufficient description for French influence in Russian railway construction. It may be tempting to equate French influence with indirect imperialism being exerted upon the Russian Empire and liken French influence to the degree of Russian imperialism through the Chinese Eastern Railway, but this is inaccurate. Imperialism implies domination but, French influence in the Russian railways was a side effect of an alliance between the two powers. It is best described by the theme of imperial intersections.

What the concept of “imperial intersections” underscores that empires do not act alone and that relationships among empires were critical to their politics.³⁸ As Cooper and Burbank note, “the intersection of empires provoked competition, imitation, and innovation – and both war and peace.”³⁹ The broader international arena and international relations of empires are also encompassed by international intersections. The work continues, “Empires did not act alone. Relationships *among* empires were critical to their politics and to their subjects' possibilities.”⁴⁰ Competition between empires is very influential to empire and imperial relations. Empires in World History also states that, “... The empires of China, Russia, the Ottomans and the Habsburgs were not imperial has-beens, as the conventional story reads. They took initiatives to counter economic and cultural challenges and played crucial roles in the conflicts and

³⁶ Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: The Decay, Collapse, and Revival of Empires* (New York: Columbia Press, 2001), 12.

³⁷ Doyle, *Empires*, 19-30.

³⁸ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 14.

³⁹ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 15.

⁴⁰ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 15.

connections that animated world politics.” Imperial intersections are not only competitions and wars but, also diplomacy and alliances to counter challenges to individual empires. The alliance between Russia and France is best described in these terms as opposed to imperialism or anything tinged with ideas of domination and hegemony. The relationship between France and Russia and the relationship’s influence on Russian railways is an illustrative example of imperial intersections.

In his essay in After Empire, Mark von Hagan notes that much has been written on the Russian Empire as an empire.⁴¹ Empire has been argued to be central to Russian history and after having discussed the definitions and themes of empire, the specific configurations of the Russian context should be explored.⁴² The commonalities among the definitions of empire discussed are that the histories of empire specific to an empire are significant, that empires are divided into cores and peripheries, and that international position is important to empires.

The history of empire in Russia begins with the unique lineage of empire it would draw upon. Dominic Lieven states that for the Russian Empire its imperial lineage is a unique blend of western and eastern sources from Rome to Byzantium in the West and its Mongol lineage in the East.⁴³ A Russian polity first took shape in the fourteenth and fifteenth century in a geographic locale no other great power at the time cared for. Russia’s name and imperial culture is attributed to warrior princes who founded a state in Kiev in the ninth century where they grew rich on trading, raiding, and controlling transport. The Riurikid princes, who got their name from Prince Riurik who was invited to rule and bring peace among them, ruled Kiev and often challenged one another due to the destabilizing process of lateral succession. Orthodoxy, the

⁴¹ Mark von Hagen, “The Russian Empire,” in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagan. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997) 38.

⁴² Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London: HaperCollins, 1997), xxiv-xxvi.

⁴³ Lieven, *Empire, The Russian Empire and Its Rivals*, 3-26

religion that served as an imperial binding, was adopted as the official religion by King Vladimir in 988 when he was baptized in the Dnieper River by a Byzantine clergy.⁴⁴

In 1204 Kiev was conquered by the Mongols and the Russian rulers were subordinated to the Mongol khans and relocated to Moscow. Under the Mongols the Muscovites expanded their dominance over other principalities and began making their way toward empire. By 1462 Mongol power waned and Moscow was appointing its own Grand Prince. In 1478 the Muscovites had conquered Novgorod; in 1547 Ivan IV officially took the title of tsar and, in 1552 conquered Kazan which began the Russian encroachment into Mongol territories. Ivan's policies were fractious for succession and by 1598 the Riurikid dynasty was finished. The Mongol conquests instilled a tradition of incorporating conquered peoples in the ruling class of the Russian Empire that would become a signature of Russian empire.⁴⁵

The period of 1584-1613, after the end of the Riurikid dynasty, was known as the Time of Troubles. The Time of Troubles saw disruptive infighting by the Russian princes, foreign invasions by Swedish kings and even the occupation of Moscow by troops of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1610-1612. The Time of Troubles came to an end with the ascension of Tsar Mikhail Romanov in 1613, the first of the Romanov dynasty that would rule Russia until 1917. The second Romanov tsar, Alexei Romanov, further increased the central power of the tsars by dismissing the unpopular patriarch Nikon of the Orthodox Church thereby subordinating the Orthodox Church to the tsars and increasing the personal power of the Romanovs.⁴⁶ The Romanov tsars worked to centralize power in their hands and consolidate autocratic rule, a staple of empire in Russia.

⁴⁴ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 185-197

⁴⁵ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 185-197.

⁴⁶ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 196.

Peter I of the Romanov dynasty would change the imperial trajectory of the Russian empire and orient it towards Europe by moving the capital to Saint Petersburg calling it “the window to the West.”⁴⁷ Peter the Great also contributed significantly to the consolidation of power in the hands of the tsars and the extreme centrality of power as a characteristic of Russian empire. Peter I became tsar in 1696. He reformed and reoriented the Russian Empire towards Europe. Peter the Great was even the first to officially redefine Russia as an empire.⁴⁸ While Peter valued the law and European forms of government, he worked to further solidify the personal and central power of the tsars and chastise the nobility through his unilateral reorganization of the government. Moreover, he subordinated the church by ending its role in crowning the tsars. Instead, this role was delegated to the senate which he created.⁴⁹ Catherine the Great continued the consolidation of power in the hands of the tsars, undertook the first major attempts at russification in the peripheral regions and, pursued policies designed to curtail the power of peripheral elites, notably the Baltic German elites.⁵⁰

Alexander I ruled with patrimonial, centralized power. The tsar was advised by his favorites and ministers, not the nobility, which prevented them from taking a unified position concerning their diminishing authority.⁵¹ These configurations became further entrenched as defining features of the Russian core after the Napoleonic wars. Alexander I died in 1825 and was succeeded by his brother, Nicholas I. In the first year of Nicholas’s saw the outbreak of the Decembrist revolt. The 1825 Decembrist revolt was interpreted by Tsar Nicholas I, as a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Seymour Becker, "Russia and the Concept of Empire," *Ab Imperio*, No. 3/4, (2000) 329.

⁴⁹ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 196-199.; Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia, Seventh Edition* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 213.

⁵⁰ Cooper and Burbank, *Empires in World History*, 119, 276-282.; Edward C. Thaden and Marianna Forster Thaden, *Russia’s Western Borderlands, 1710-1870*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984)

⁵¹ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 355.

rebellion against the principle of autocracy.⁵² Illustrating the fundamental role of centralized power and autocracy in the Russian Empire; in 1830 Nicholas's deputy minister of education announced the slogan, "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality."⁵³ The autocratic tendencies and monopoly of power of the Romanov tsars were defining traits of empire in Tsarist Russia. An important characteristic of empire in Russia was a core with highly centralized power in its hands.

Another important aspect of empire in Russia is that it was a multiethnic.⁵⁴ The Russian empire's core and peripheral geographic regions were distinguished, among other things, by ethnicity. Peripheral regions were easier to identify by nationality, religion, or ethnicity as was most of the ethnic Russian core. The very center of the core, the Romanov dynasty, its ministers, other central elites at the highest level of power and governance were harder to identify ethnically because they were not ethnically homogenous. The Russian core by the nineteenth century was geographically centered on Moscow and St. Petersburg.⁵⁵ The center of the core, relative to hierarchy, was the Romanov dynasty and the tsars. But it also consisted of ministers and a diverse nobility and aristocracy. The Russian Empire was not ethnically Russian. Neither were the tsars nor the nobility. In fact, both actively distinguished themselves from the people.⁵⁶ The nobility and elites in the Russian Empire's core were not of homogenous origins. The tsars had varying methods of incorporating elites that differentiated it from other European powers, a practice in place during Mongol rule. The Russian Empire practiced the marrying-in and

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Andreas Kappeler and Alfred Clayton, *The Russian Empire a Multiethnic History*, (New York: Pearson Education, 2001).

⁵⁵ Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 14.

⁵⁶ Ronald G. Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, "National" Identity, and Theories of Empires," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald G. Suny and Terry Martin. (New York: Oxford Press, 2001), 26, 38.

assimilating of peripheral elites into the core elite.⁵⁷ The elites of the Russian core varied greatly and were melting pots of multi-ethnic elites that were homogenized through socialization facilitated by the tsar. These assimilated elites were often met with distrust by the ethnically Russian nobility in the core.⁵⁸

The Russian Empire had several methods of incorporating elites into the core. The first method of incorporation is known as 'most favored lord status'. The 'most favored lord status' entailed incentivizing peripheral elites to allow themselves to be absorbed into and married into the core elite. This method was used in Ukraine. The second method of elite incorporation in the Russian empire is that of the colonial model, which was seen in the Far East and Central Asia. Kazakhstan is an example of a periphery subjected to the colonial model of elite incorporation. In the colonial model peripheral elites are subordinated to core elites and can only climb the administrative ladder in their particular peripheral region. They are not absorbed into the core elite and there remains a glaring differentiation between them. The colonial model involves subordination and interference by the core elite in said peripheral region. The third model involves relative autonomy where the tsar rules a peripheral region indirectly through local, peripheral elite. Unlike the 'most favored lord' strategy this elite remains easily distinguished from the core elite but unlike the colonial model, the peripheral elite group can climb the administrative ladder to near the top and, intermingle with the core elites. Their power and influence are not confined to their particular peripheral region. The Baltic and the Baltic German ruling elite are the best examples of this strategy; they were highly utilized but not assimilated.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Dominic Lieven, *Empire: Russia and her Enemies*, 621.

⁵⁸ John A. Armstrong, *The European Administrative Elite*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 118.

⁵⁹ David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1998), 64 – 66.

By the nineteenth century and the age of railroads the core elites of the empire began to view their interests and those of the Romanovs as unaligned and discordant.⁶⁰ In the time of railroad construction in the Russian Empire there was a distinct division between the tsars as the centers of the core and the ethnically Russian and non-Russian assimilated elites in peripheries of the core. The absolute centralization of power in the hands of the autocratic Romanovs and their separation from the majority of the core elites was a quintessential and definitive feature of empire in Russia.

The Russian Empire is described as a traditional land empire or a contiguous empire.⁶¹ This put Russia in the family of European Empires of the Habsburgs and Ottomans in the nineteenth century and differentiated it from the maritime colonial empires of France, and Britain. The grand scale of the Russian Empire's over-land expansion made the Russian Empire a multiethnic empire. The Russian Empire's expansion after the weakening of the Mongol Empire began with the reconquest of the lands considered traditionally Russian before their unity was shattered by the Mongol invasions. The Russian Empire's conquest of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, also known as the Gathering of the Lands of the Golden Horde, in the sixteenth century unquestionably made Russia a multiethnic empire. Russian expansion continued after recovering from the hiccups of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century into Northern Asia and Siberia. From the time of Peter the Great into the nineteenth century the Russian Empire would also expand westward, absorbing the Baltic regions, Finland, partitioning Poland, encroaching into East Europe, and advancing towards the Black Sea. From the mid-

⁶⁰ Lieven, *Empire: Russia and her Enemies*, 613.

⁶¹ Tilly, *How Empires*, 13.

nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the Russian Empire resumed its march eastward, making its way to the Pacific and nibbling at China.⁶²

Russia's advances and expansionist ambition not only brought many diverse peoples into her dominion, but also brought her into contact with other empires in Europe that could match or even best her. Russia became one of the Great Powers of Europe and involved herself extensively in the international relationships of Europe. The maintenance of the balance of power in Europe was a driving force in international politics from the last half of the eighteenth century up until the First World War, a force the Russian Empire often found herself at the wrong end of. The Russian Empire's persevering ambitions on Constantinople embroiled it in a war in Crimea against Britain and France that illustrated the inadequacies of the Russian military, industry and infrastructure. By the end of the war in 1856, Russia's poor performance in the war made many in Europe and Russia question the empire's status and future as a great power. This fall to Earth was rather jarring considering that Russian prestige and self esteem had been soaring since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Russia had played a crucial role in the defeat of Napoleon, Tsar Nicholas I had assumed the role of 'gendarme of Europe' and protector of Metternich's monarchist, post Napoleon European order, crushed several revolts including that of the Decembrists, Polish rebellions and uprisings in 1848. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War inspired her to pursue policies of industrialization.

The Russian Empire's state-sponsored industrialization drive, was primarily inspired by considerations of security and, a fierce international imperial and military competition.⁶³

Russia's industrialization, though begun after the Crimean War, did not truly pick up until the 1880s and 1890s. Important steps were made before then, like the renewed effort in railway

⁶² Kappeler, *Mutiethnic History*..

⁶³ von Hagan, *The Russian Empire*, 61.

construction in the 1860s as well as the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Railway construction would dramatically increase in importance at the end of the nineteenth century to become the underpinning and spinal cord of industrial development in the Russian Empire. The history of railroads and their role in Russian industrialization will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

Before delving into the construction of Russian railways and its role in the industrialization of the Russian Empire it is important to keep in mind some of characteristics of Russian empire. One of the most important features unique to empire of Russia was its daunting size by the time of railway construction in the nineteenth century. The Russian Empire spanned approximately one sixth of the world's landmass, exponentially increasing the urgency of and burdens on transportation infrastructure, especially railways, compared to the other European great powers. The Tsars consistently pursued policies of increasing consolidation of power and sole decision making authority in their hands, the absolute central core of the Russian Empire. The international standing of the Russian Empire was yanked from one of prestige to a position of doubt in the mid nineteenth century, which coincided with an era of European Great power politics where no one power could dominate the others and where alliances, coalitions, and cooperation became increasingly essential to their continued prominence. This international situation increased the intensity of imperial intersections in which the Russian railways and industrialization would become ensnared.

Early Transportation in the Russian Empire, the Beginnings of the Railroads, Railroads and, Industrialization

The construction of railroads in the Russian Empire was a massive undertaking and required a significant amount of resources and effort by the Tsarist government. Transportation infrastructure had always been a significant issue in the Russian Empire, and before the railways the Russian empire relied on canals and roads for its transportation needs. The canals and roads did not completely meet the needs of the Russian Empire but, they also did not require massive amounts of resources that were required by the railways and consistently remained in the purview of the Russian government. Oftentimes the requirements of railroad construction exceeded the resources of the tsars both financially and administratively. The Russian Empire frequently had to seek outside finance for the railroads and the Tsars relied heavily on the decision making powers of their ministers. The construction of railways in Russia was not just important to transportation and mobility in Russia but it also became the lynchpin for broader industrialization of Russia. The later imperial intersection between France and Russia influenced railway construction in the Russian Empire to become internationalized but this influence was not limited to Russian railways. In fact, it had broader implications for the broader industrialization of the Russian Empire. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the history of transportation infrastructure in the Russian Empire, and then provide a basic history of Russian railways. The chapter will then discuss the central, indispensable role of Russian railways to the industrialization and economy of the Russian Empire. The chapter will discuss the role and importance of French foreign loans in financing the Russian railways.

Before the railroads came to the tsarist empire, its primary transportation infrastructure was canals and roads. Canals in Russia played a much larger part in transportation than roads in the Russian Empire.⁶⁴ Canals in the Russian Empire were the most developed and important parts of Russia's transportation infrastructure before the coming of the railroads. Until the coming of the railroads Russia's rivers and lakes were the natural means of transportation and communication but, were limited by their course.⁶⁵ The golden age of river transport in the Russian Empire was the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁶⁶

Peter the Great vastly improved the canal infrastructure in the Russian Empire, an undertaking inspired by the relocation of Russia's capital to St. Petersburg and his desire to shift Russia's orientation westward. He brought in several experts from Europe for the expansion of the canal system.⁶⁷ Peter the Great's pursuit of reorienting Russia with Europe inspired him to build the Upper Volga canal system which linked Russia to the Baltic in 1709. The construction of canals and the primacy of water transportation was a commonplace in Tsarist policy after Peter the Great. After the Napoleonic wars more canals were undertaken between 1818 and 1820, notably the Onega Canal.⁶⁸ Paul I and Alexander I both worked to improve the *Tikhvinskii* and *Mariinskii* systems and, at the end of their reigns, Saint Petersburg was connected to the interior of Russia by three major water routes.⁶⁹

Canal transport in the Russian Empire did not fully meet its needs and had serious dilemmas. Lakes and rivers in the Russian Empire were not navigable year round. In the winter

⁶⁴ William L. Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization 1800-1860*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 264.

⁶⁵ Richard Mowbray Haywood, *Russia Enters the Railway Age, 1842-1855*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 5., J. N. Westwood, *A History of Russian Railways*, (London: Unwin Brothers, 1964), 1.

⁶⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 1.

⁶⁷ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 7.

⁶⁸ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 1-2.

⁶⁹ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 6.

they became frozen and in the summer some became too shallow.⁷⁰ Goods were transported on the canals on barges which were typically pulled by kedging anchors or pulled by man power or horse power from the riverbanks. Sails were rarely used.⁷¹ In 1815 the first steam powered ship was introduced in Russia, and by 1817 two steamships were plying the Kama River. In 1823, the first steamship appeared on the Dnieper.⁷²

The Russian government did not merely want to import steamships. Rather, it sought to attract foreign steamship expertise by issuing long-term exclusive privileges to steamship operation and construction companies while the government retained ownership of the steamships.⁷³ The government preferred policies that attracted foreign expertise as opposed to importing finished foreign goods. This preference would remain a staple of Russian policy with the railroads as well. Steamships did not profligate sufficiently in Russia's canals to meet its transport needs for commerce or the military. By 1832 there were only 17 steam ships operating in Russia, 16, in 1840, 99 in 1850 and 339 in 1860. These numbers were extremely small when compared to the number of conventional ships operating in Russia at the same time.⁷⁴ The 99 steamships in 1850 were out of a total of 57,000 Russian ships.⁷⁵ Another glaring limitation of canals in the Russian Empire is that they were isolated from resources, ports and one another.⁷⁶

The Russian Empire also relied on a network of roads for its transportation needs before the railroads. The Russian army primarily utilized the roads and not the canals. Roads in the Russian Empire were less developed than the canals but, as with the latter, concerted efforts were

⁷⁰ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 1., William L. Blackwell, *The Industrialization of Russia, An Historical Perspective*, (New York: Harlan Davidson, 1970), 49.

⁷¹ Kedging anchors were a series of alternating anchors used to pull barges upriver.

⁷² Haywood, *Railway Age*, 19., Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 2.

⁷³ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 21.

⁷⁴ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 24.

⁷⁵ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 269.

⁷⁶ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 2.

made by the tsars to improve them. Unlike the canals, the roads were used much more extensively by the military.⁷⁷ The first concerted effort to improve administrative roads was undertaken by Alexander I. He began work in 1817 on a hard-surfaced road or *chaussée* from St. Petersburg to Moscow. Nicholas I continued his father's interest in developing land transport from 1825-1835, a project that was inspired by enhancing the mobility of the army. Little progress was made in building *chaussées* before the advent of railroads and secondary roads did not fare much better. The secondary roads in the Russian Empire were little more than dirt roads. The roads were faster than the canals: this was especially so in winter, when goods could be carried between St. Petersburg and Moscow in ten to sixteen days on the Moscow *chaussée*. Roads were also faster between longer distances due to the post stations that dotted the empire where a rider could rest his horse or exchange it for a fresh animal to insure a speedier journey.⁷⁸ Roads were not a satisfactory answer to Russia's commercial or military needs.⁷⁹

The environment that the railways faced in Russia when compared to other powers in Europe was that Russia was extremely large, had a relatively undeveloped economy, and the extremely autocratic and paternalistic nature of its government.⁸⁰ The first railways in the Russian Empire were, as in most other countries, short lines to convey materials to and from mining enterprises. These primitive lines appeared in the late eighteenth century and were simple systems of wooden rails that utilized wagons pulled by beasts of burden.⁸¹ Tramways were even recorded in 1763-1765 in the Altai Mountains.⁸²

⁷⁷ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 21, 24., Blackwell Beginnings of... page 269

⁷⁸ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 21-30., Westwood, *Railway Age*, 19.

⁷⁹ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 269.

⁸⁰ Haywood, *Railway Age*, xv.

⁸¹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 20.

⁸² Haywood, *Railway Wage*, 46.

In the 1830's a debate arose concerning railways in the empire. Many elites argued for railroads to be built, especially in the Black Sea region. Those who opposed building railroads often had stakes in the Russian canal system and appealed to a sense of technological Slavophilism. The technological Slavophiles argued that railroads were a European, or a non-Russian technology unlike the canals. This, they argued, made railroads inappropriate for the Russian context.⁸³ The railroad lobby eventually prevailed and Russia opened its first steam railway to the public in 1837. This is comparable to the time when other European powers were opening their first steam rail lines. France opened her first line in 1832, Germany in 1835, and Austria in 1837.⁸⁴

The first steam railway, the Tsarskoe Selo railroad, was the first rail line of significance in the empire. The Tsarskoe Selo railroad was the brain child of Franz Anton von Gerstner who had built the first continental European railroad.⁸⁵ The Tsarskoe Selo line connected the capital with the tsar's summer palace of the same name and was intended to be an experimental line to test the feasibility of railways in the Russian Empire.⁸⁶ This line proved to be a resounding success and by 1857, it was running seven locomotives, carrying 855,345 passengers annually and the line paid out seven percent dividends to investors.⁸⁷ This line was also granted unusual latitude by Tsar Alexander II. It was a state enterprise but it enjoyed private control over tariffs and taxes.⁸⁸

1842 saw three important milestones in the consolidation of power and control of Russian railways in hands of the Tsar and the government. Tsar Nicholas I approved the construction of

⁸³ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 270-272.

⁸⁴ Haywood, *Railway Age*, xvii.

⁸⁵ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 276-277.

⁸⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 23.

⁸⁷ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 24.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

the Warsaw-Vienna Railway in 1839 but ceased in 1842 when the company granted the construction contract was unable to raise sufficient funds. The Tsar ordered the treasury to take over the line but ownership was later turned over to a Warsaw company in 1857, after Nicholas's death.⁸⁹ After the disruption in construction of the Warsaw-Vienna line in 1842, Tsar Nicholas I created the Department of Railroads.⁹⁰ The creation of the Department of Railways and ordering the Treasury to take control of the Warsaw-Vienna Railway signified that Tsar Nicholas felt railroads were beneficial enough to warrant government sacrifice and effort to build them.⁹¹ The Warsaw-Vienna Railway was completed in 1848 and used by Russia to send troops to crush revolts in Europe that same year.⁹² Lastly, in 1842 Nicholas I decreed, the construction of Moscow-Saint Petersburg line. This was the third significant railway in the Russian Empire and was completed in 1852.⁹³ The connection between Saint Petersburg and Warsaw was also begun in 1852.⁹⁴

The aforementioned problems of railway construction in Russia were all factors in these first three major lines built during the reign of Nicholas I.⁹⁵ Nicholas I was the tsar that brought railways to the Russian Empire. Railway construction under Nicholas I had two important characteristics that would become precedents for the planning of railway construction in the later decades of the nineteenth century. The first was his proclivity for government control and government facilitation of Russian railway construction. The second was the precedence of military concerns over economic concerns when planning the railways. Tsarskoe-Selo line did nothing to help merchants and the Warsaw-Vienna line was used for troop movements in the

⁸⁹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 25.

⁹⁰ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 283.

⁹¹ Haywood, *Railway Age*, xvii.

⁹² Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 27.

⁹³ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 283.

⁹⁴ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 320.

⁹⁵ Haywood, *Railway Age*, xv.

west borderlands and putting down revolts. Moreover, the Moscow-St. Petersburg line was conducting military exercises before it was even completed.⁹⁶

Nicholas I also continued the strategy of using foreigners to develop Russian railways and Russia's domestic capabilities for railway production. Nicholas imported foreigners to build locomotives in Russia and to develop technology as opposed to just buying finished products. The American firm, Eastwick and Winan was invited to build a large factory at the on the Neva River at the Aleksandrovsk foundry. When Emperor Nicholas died the foundry was renamed Nikolaev in his honor.⁹⁷ The American George Washington Whistler was invited as a consultant to the Russian Empire and it was he who first introduced the five foot gauge for Russian rail lines.⁹⁸ Anton von Gerstner, mentioned earlier, was another example of imported expertise in the time of Nicholas I. These are just a few examples, but the Russian Empire drew on railway expertise from all over Europe and the United States.

Russia was a railroad pioneer on par with other European powers at the end of the 1830s under Tsar Nicholas. But, a lack of decisive government action after 1842 until Nicholas's death, together with other problems, caused Russia to fall far behind the other European powers in terms of railroad construction.⁹⁹ The Crimean War from 1853-1856 halted almost all railway development in the Russian Empire and further contributed to Russia falling behind in railway

⁹⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 26., Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 317.

⁹⁷ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 316.

⁹⁸ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 30-31.

Russia was using at least four different gauge standards by 1860. The other European powers were also using multiple gauges at this time. The decision to use the five foot gauge was made through concerns of freight and the stability of locomotives and rail cars on the tracks. The decision was not made because of strategic or military concerns as commonly believed. Furthermore, it would take decades to phase out the use of the several different railway gauges in both Europe and Russia. For at least two decades it was not clear that the five foot gauge would become the sole standard gauge in Russia or, that the four foot and one eighth inch gauge would become the sole standard in Europe.

⁹⁹ Haywood, *Railway Age*, 239.

construction.¹⁰⁰ The death of Nicholas I in 1855 and the Crimean War ended the first era of railway construction in the Russian Empire.

Nicholas I was the first to bring railways to Russia. He also began a legacy of government involvement and control in the construction of Russian railways. Nicholas began a cycle of government control of railways that would give way to private control and later return to government control. Nicholas I also established a precedent of strategic and military considerations having an influential role in the construction of railways. When Nicholas I died it ended an era of state financing and control and allowed for experiments with private enterprises.¹⁰¹

Government control of the Russian railroads eased after the death Nicholas I and under Alexander II who ruled Russia from 1855 until his assassination in 1881. In 1857 there were around 720 miles of common-carrier railways in the Russian Empire but in the coming decades the railway mileage in the Russian Empire would explode. It began with private enterprises or enterprises initiated by local governments. The Russian government would finally reassert its direct control and ownership over these railways in later decades. The 1860s would mark the beginning of a railway boom in Russia that would continue until the outbreak of the First World War.

The first years of Alexander II's reign were a continuation of the lull in railroad construction that began in the last half of the 1840s and was at its lowest during the Crimean War. Even during this period of slowed railway construction important progress was made for Russian railways and private participation in them. In 1856, the Main Company, a consortium of private railway promoters, built several Russian rail lines in the following ten years but would

¹⁰⁰ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 38-39.

¹⁰¹ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 321.

ultimately prove damaging to Russian railway efforts.¹⁰² In 1857, the Society for the Development of Russian Railways was created and encouraged foreign and private railway enterprises. In 1858 the St. Petersburg-Peterhof suburban line was built and would become the nucleus of the Baltic railway network. This network was financed by Baron Stieglitz. In 1861, a Russian company undertook the construction of a rail line to the Holy Trinity in Sergiev from Moscow, an undertaking that was financed by a well-known Slavophile named Fedor Vasilevich Chizhov.¹⁰³ In 1863, the St. Petersburg-Warsaw and the Nizhnii-Novgorod lines were completed and, the Moscow-Sevastopol and Odessa-Kiev lines were approved for construction.¹⁰⁴ This period saw important characteristics of railway development that would be carried into the railway boom that began in the 1860s. The Odessa-Kiev line was constructed with special concessions granted to private industries. The Riga-Dunaberg line was built and financed by the Riga Chamber of Commerce.¹⁰⁵ Railways were undertaken as private enterprises and by local governments under Tsar Alexander II.

Alexander II was significantly more in favor of private companies than his successor and this would continue into the boom years.¹⁰⁶ Despite the Tsar's preference there were several failures in private railroad enterprises leading up to the railway boom that would have long term implications. The several private companies involved in Russian railway construction were often starved of capital and often employed not very competent people.¹⁰⁷ The failures of foreign and private railway ventures left the financial world not very confident of Russian

¹⁰² Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 41.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 44.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 42.

railway ventures.¹⁰⁸ These failures and shortages of capital resigned the Russian government to building its own railways. But the need for foreign capital was still great and the government still made several concessions to private enterprises in order to attract foreign capital.¹⁰⁹

The railway boom began in the last half of the 1860s and into the early twentieth century. J.N. Westwood writes that the railway boom began in 1866 and ended in 1899, Peter Gatrell argues that the railway boom occurred from 1868-1905, while William L. Blackwell seems to believe that the railway boom was longer, lasting from 1859-1915. These authors also seem to agree that the boom years can be divided into two distinct booms. There is a two year difference in beginning dates, but both seem to agree that the end of the war with Turkey in 1878 punctuated the first boom, which was followed by a moderate lull in the 1880s. The 1890s are agreed to be the decade of the fastest railway growth, which was curtailed by the financial crisis of 1900. There is disagreement if years following the Russo-Japanese War up until the outbreak of World War I should be considered boom years for the railways.¹¹⁰

In 1866, there was 3,000 miles of railway in the Russian Empire: by 1883 there was 14,700 miles.¹¹¹ Between 1866 and 1877 railway mileage tripled.¹¹² The Russian government ordered 900 locomotives and 32,000 freight wagons from 1868 to 1878.¹¹³ During this period railway construction continued to be subject to government planning, however most lines remained in private hands. Many rail lines at this time, like the Warsaw-Vienna-Petersburg line,

¹⁰⁸ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 49.

¹⁰⁹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 70.

¹¹⁰ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, Blackwell, *Railway Age*.

¹¹¹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, Appendix 2.

¹¹² Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 49.

¹¹³ Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy 1850-1917*, (London: Batsford, 1986), 151.

were mostly strategic but they also definitely met economic needs by connecting the markets of European Russia with those at the Russian core.¹¹⁴

These boom years saw the rise of prosperous railway speculators, or “railway kings” in the construction of Russian railways. Westwood divides the railway kings into three groups. The first group consists of older men who entered the railway field after having already made their fortunes in other businesses like Benardaki, the promoter of the Moscow-Yaroslavl Railway. The second group consisted of professional bankers like Blikoh and Utin who became chairmen of several railway lines which they were financing. The third group was composed of the younger generation who made their fortunes solely on the railway promotions like Polykov, von Mekk, von Derviz and Melnikov.¹¹⁵ The Russian government also sold off its railways for capital and many of these railways only became profitable after their sale.¹¹⁶ Despite this, however, most railways remained a drain on the Russian Treasury.¹¹⁷

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 marked the end of this first period of railway boom and the government’s preference for private railways. The Russo-Turkish War demonstrated the inefficiency of Russia’s railway network which was mostly in private hands. The railway networks had already demonstrated that it was struggling to accommodate the rapidly increasing volume of traffic. During the Russo-Turkish War there was chaos on the lines, military supplies sat at stations for months. This demonstrated to the Russian Government the inefficiency and the lack of capacity of their rail networks.¹¹⁸ This inspired the Russian Government to reverse its policy toward private railway enterprise and it began buying back many of the country’s rail lines.

¹¹⁴ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 61.

¹¹⁵ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 70.

¹¹⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 74-75.

¹¹⁷ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 75.

¹¹⁸ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 75, 81, 86.

The 1880s were a lull in the railway boom years but saw the government buying up railways and not unremarkable progress in Russian railway construction. In 1880 only about 60 kilometers of railways were under state control and management.¹¹⁹ By 1883 approximately four-fifths of investment capital in private railways was provided by the government.¹²⁰ The Baltic railways were also bought by the Russian government in the 1880s.¹²¹

The 1880s also saw the expansion of Russian railways into the East. In 1881 Central Asia began to be increasingly integrated into the Russian Empire, and military measures against the population required the construction of a military rail line running east from the Caspian Sea through Uzuw-Ade to Krasnovodsk and extended as far as Kizil Arbat. In 1886 the line was extended to the Amu-Darya River further in 1888 to Samarkand and finally to Tashkent in 1899.¹²² In 1883 the first rail line into Siberia was completed from Ekaterinburg to Tyumen with an eastern connection between Kama and Ob Rivers.¹²³ The 1880s also saw the first proposals and considerations for a Trans-Siberian railway motivated by Tsar Alexander III.¹²⁴ Construction of the Trans-Siberian railway would not take off until the 1890s.

The 1890s saw the second and most dramatic boom in railway construction in the Russian Empire. From, 1892-1896 the Russian railway network expanded by 8,370 versts or a 29.1% increase in mileage; in 1897-1901 the network was expanded by an additional 14,758 versts, a 39.7% increase in mileage.¹²⁵ An additional statistic states that the mileage increased by

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 76.

¹²² Edward Ames, "A Century of Russian Railroad Construction: 1837-1936." *American Slavic and East European Review* 3/4 (1947).

¹²³ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 108-109.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Margaret Miller, *The Economic Development of Russia 1905-1914*, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1967), 188

75% in 1890-1900.¹²⁶ Yet another statistic states that railway mileage from 1892 to 1902 increased by 46% and, total expenditure on railroads in 1890-1900 totaled 3.5 billion rubles.¹²⁷

The massive boom in railway construction in the Russian Empire during the 1890s began under Ivan Vyshnegradsky who served as Finance Minister from 1887-1892. But it, was primarily the brain child of his successor at the Ministry of Finance, Count Sergei Witte. Witte served as Minister of Finance from 1892-1903 and previously served as Minister of Ways and Communications, Director of the Department of Railroads, and served with the Southwestern Railway and Odessa Railway. Sergei Witte would facilitate a massive upsurge in railway construction which included the Trans-Siberian Railway and a broader industrialization drive in Russia with a strategy which would become known as, “The Witte System.”

The first railway into Siberia was completed in 1885, but the massive construction of railways into Siberia truly began under Count Witte. In 1892 Witte presented his plan for a Trans-Siberian Railway to Alexander III. It called for including, plans to link several resource nodes vital for railway construction and proposed the creation of a Siberian Railway Committee made of the absolute highest members of government. The committee was comprised of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Finance, Minister of Ways and Communications, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of the Crown Lands, Minister of War, Minister of State Control and, managed by State Secretary Kulomzin. Additionally, Tsar Alexander III appointed his heir, Nicholas II, as chairman of the committee.¹²⁸ The creation of this committee was a milestone in that it signified that railway construction and expansion was now at the center of governmental priorities.

¹²⁶ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 140.

¹²⁷ Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 265.

¹²⁸ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 110.

Tsar Alexander III's enthusiasm for the Trans-Siberian Railway was evidenced by sending his heir to Vladivostok to lay the first stone of the Vladivostok-Chelyabinsk line in May 1891.¹²⁹ The railways, especially the Trans-Siberian, had attracted the full attention of the Tsar, the Russian government and, had become central to their policies. A letter from Tsar Alexander III to Nicholas further emphasizes the importance of the railway,

“Your Imperial Highness.

Returning from a long journey to the far corners of the Russian land You, by My command, in Vladivostok on the 19th day of May 1891 laid the foundation stone of the through Siberian railway line planned by Me.

Now appointing You Chairman of the Siberian Railway Committee, I entrust You the carrying out to the end of this Russian project of peace and enlightenment in the East.

May the Almighty help You to achieve this enterprise so close to my heart, together with the proposals to facilitate the peopling and industrial development of Siberia. I firmly believe that You will justify the hopes of Me and of beloved Russia.

Sincerely, loving You with all my soul,

Alexander.”¹³⁰

Alexander III could be described as the Second Railway Tsar. Railways were of utmost importance to him and he made them a central priority for the Russian government.

Cataloguing every section of the Trans-Siberian railway is beyond the scope of this discussion but it would be negligent not to mention some of the more important lines. Lines west of Chelyabinsk were not considered part of the Trans-Siberian route. This made the Ussuri Railway between the port of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk the first section to be started. The South Ussuri was opened permanently in 1896, and North Ussuri in 1899. The Western Siberian Railway was begun in 1892, completed in 1897, when it crossed the Irtysh and Ob rivers. The Central Siberian Railway connected Ob to Irkutsk and was begun in 1893 and completed in 1898. The Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) was begun in 1897 and completed in 1904. It would be used as a tool for Russian expansionist aspirations in China. The Amur Railway was

¹²⁹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 109.

¹³⁰ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 110.

constructed after the disaster of the Russo-Japanese War and envisioned as an auxiliary line for the CER which the war had exposed as vulnerable. The Tyumen-Omsk was built in 1909-1913 as an auxiliary route for the Chelyabinsk-Omsk Railway; it offered a shorter route to the Baltic ports that also passed through agricultural lands.¹³¹

The Witte system facilitated the explosion of railway construction in the Russian Empire and also industrialization in the Russian Empire. The Siberian Railway Committee along with Alexander III made railways a central priority for the government but the Witte System would make railway construction central to the entire industrial economy, and the finances of the Russian Empire. The main feature of the Witte system was a policy of public works, above all by means of railway construction, for the government to stimulate industrial enterprise which would be undertaken by increased government spending. The theory was that extensive railroad construction funded by deficit spending would stimulate the growth of the metallurgical and mining industries. The expansion of heavy industry needed to support railroad construction would then create favorable conditions for the development of light industries.¹³² In the Witte system railroad construction would serve as the lynchpin for the industrialization of the Russian Empire.

The great industrial upswing came when the railroad building of the state assumed unprecedented proportions and became the main lever of rapid industrialization policy. The aim of the Russian government was to encourage the use of domestic materials for the construction of railways. For this reason, the government often demanded that the charters of railway companies contain a commitment to use only materials constructed in the Russian Empire.¹³³The

¹³¹ Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 111-116.

¹³² Theodore H. Von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 76-77.

¹³³ Gartrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 191.

Russian government's strategy of fostering domestic production continued which grew rapidly due to high prices and preferential government orders from domestic producers of railway materials.¹³⁴ The Russian government did not favor all branches of industry equally and focused specifically on the metallurgy and manufacturing industries. The continuation of railroad construction on a large scale throughout the 1890s provided the Russian government with convenient machinery for maintaining demand for domestic industrial products.¹³⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century almost 30,000 miles of track had been built, and there were over 9,000 locomotives, rolling stock and, 223,661 rail cars in the Russian empire.¹³⁶ In 1887, the total industrial production of the Russian Empire was estimated at 1.34 billion rubles for 1900, it was over 3 billion rubles and by 1913, 5.62 billion rubles.¹³⁷ By 1900, 83 factories manufactured industrial and railroad equipment with total product sales of 207 million rubles in that year alone.¹³⁸ In 1895, 57% of all iron and steel produced in Russia was supplied to the railways, a total that steadily increased to 64% by 1899.¹³⁹ The contribution of railway construction to demand for domestic industrial production was pivotal.

The railway boom of the 1890s facilitated industrialization by connecting far flung industrial and resource nodes in the Russian Empire. This new connectivity allowed previously remote mining, metallurgical and, industrial centers to flourish and resulted in the establishment of new industrial centers in the Russian Empire which replaced traditional centers of industry and mining. The Urals, a traditional center of heavy industry in the Russian Empire, was replaced by Ukraine in the late nineteenth century as a center of heavy industry. With the

¹³⁴ Gershenkron, *Economic Development*, 19.

¹³⁵ Gershenkron, *Economic Development*, 126.

¹³⁶ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 45.

¹³⁷ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 44.

¹³⁸ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 51.

¹³⁹ Gartrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 153.

coming of railroads, the resources and location of the Ukraine made it much better suited for the development of an iron and steel industry. Most of the growth of these industries in the late nineteenth century took place in the Southwest of the Russian Empire. By 1900, over half of the Russia's iron and steel came from the Ukraine.¹⁴⁰ Ukraine mining and metallurgy, combined with beat and sugar industry, accounted for a fourth of Russian industrial output. The remaining fraction of industrial production in the Russian Empire came from other emerging centers in the borderlands. These centers included the extractive industries of the Trans Caucasus, particularly oil production in Baku, and manufacturing enterprises of the northwestern cities, most notably Riga and Vilnius.¹⁴¹ The railroads also facilitated the development of the engineering industry in Saint Petersburg.¹⁴² Railroads underpinned the industrial development of several new centers of industry, manufacturing, metallurgy, resource extraction and other economic activities. The new centers also displaced and replaced many older, traditional centers of these economic activities.

The Witte system relied on deficit spending to fund the construction of railroads and the broader industrialization in the Russian Empire. The financial burdens of industrialization on the Russian Empire were staggering and often forced it to rely heavily on foreign loans. Between 1890 and 1900, the Russian government paid on the average more than 120 million rubles annually for railroad construction. Total expenditure on railroads from 1890 to 1900 was 3.5 billion rubles.¹⁴³ Between 1896 and 1900, Russian investment in railways represented one quarter of total net investment. And, if investments in railway transport equipment are included Russian investment creeps closer to 30% of total net investment.¹⁴⁴ The amount of debt contracted on behalf of railway construction in the Russian Empire to 1908 is estimated at more

¹⁴⁰ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 51.

¹⁴¹ Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 45.

¹⁴² Gartrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 153.

¹⁴³ Von Laue, *Sergei Witte*, 262-265.

¹⁴⁴ Gartrell, *Tsarist Economy*, 151.

than one-half of the entirety of state debt.¹⁴⁵ This figure does not include operation costs which were also significant drains on the Russian Treasury. A majority of the rail lines controlled and operated by the Russian government operated at a substantial loss and were frequently the source of massive amounts of misallocated funds. The losses were absorbed primarily by the state.¹⁴⁶

The Russian government relied heavily on foreign investment and foreign loan to finance its railroad construction and industrialization. Out of the 3.5 billion rubles spent on railways from 1890-1900 over half was supplied by foreign lenders.¹⁴⁷ At the end of the 1880s, the French Third Republic would become by far the largest source of foreign credit for the Russian Empire. Between 1893 and 1914 French holdings never fell below 26% of Russia's foreign debt, and frequently exceeded 30%.¹⁴⁸ France in the Witte system was by far the largest holder of Russian foreign debt. In 1895, 30% of Russian direct government bonds were held by foreigners. Of that total figure, French holdings were 27.4%. In 1894, foreign holdings were 37% and French holdings were 27.4% of that; by 1914 foreign holdings increased to 48.4% and French holdings made up 30.7% of that total.¹⁴⁹ In 1914, 61.1% of total Russian public debt was held in France.¹⁵⁰ The most important form of French capital in Russia consisted of Russian government bonds. The second in importance were investment bonds, a substantial portion of which were railway bonds.¹⁵¹

The construction of railways in the Russian Empire was a monumental contribution to the mobilization of resources. The railways were far more expansive and far more effective than the

¹⁴⁵ Miller, *Economic Development*, 194.

¹⁴⁶ Miller, *Economic Development*, 196-197., Westwood, *Russian Railways*, 130, 133., Blackwell, *Industrialization of Russia*, 48.

¹⁴⁷ Von Laue, *Sergei Witte*, 263.

¹⁴⁸ Olga Crisp, *Studies in the Russian Economy Before 1914*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1976), 198, 202.

¹⁴⁹ Crisp, *Studies*, 202.

¹⁵⁰ Crisp, *Studies*, 203.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

canals and the roads that preceded their construction. The railways began with the interest of Tsar Nicholas I but only took off under Alexander III. The Russian government oscillated between predominantly government initiated and owned railways to facilitating private railway enterprises, only to reassume control of the railways after the Russo-Turkish war in 1878.

Finance Minister Count Sergei Witte would exponentially increase the government's role in the railways and general industrialization. Witte undertook a rapid program of industrialization under Alexander III that made explosive railroad construction the underpinning of the Russian Empire's industrialization and manufacturing. The Russian government was consistent in its insistence that railroad companies used only domestically produced materials for railway construction, creating a demand that fueled rapid industrial expansion. The railways also connected far flung manufacturing and resource nodes, and advance that facilitated rapid growth in previously unconnected but resource rich areas. The connectedness the railways brought created new centers of industry in the border lands of the empire and replaced more traditional areas of mining and manufacturing in the interior of the empire of such as the Ural Mountains.

Deficit spending and foreign loans were also vital to the railroad construction and industrialization of the Witte system. Witte's system of industrialization strained the Russian Treasury beyond its means, causing it to look abroad for foreign capital. By the end of his tenure as Finance Minister, Witte had left Russia with the largest foreign debt of any country in the world at that time. France, just prior to Witte's accession to head of the Finance Ministry, became Russia's primary source of foreign capital and foreign loans, a role it would continue to have until the outbreak of the First World War.

The construction of railroads in the Russian Empire set the stage for complex and pervasive imperial intersections with the French Third Republic during Russian industrialization.

The construction of railroads underpinned economic development and became the focus of the government during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The railways facilitated the rapid development of heavy industry, dramatically increased the mobility of resources, and connected far flung provinces, allowing them to flourish. The railroads also had obvious military implications concerning the speed of mobilization. The railroads were of utmost importance to the internal affairs of the Russian Empire and its standing as a great European power. The massive amount of foreign debt used to finance the Russian railroads tied their construction in with Russia's international affairs. The railroads, which became central to the internal affairs of the Russian Empire, and were controlled primarily by the Russian government, were not solely tied to domestic policy. They became, to an extent, intertwined with foreign policy, especially towards France; in turn, this foreign policy had financial implications. The financing of Russian railroads, the lynchpin of its industrialization, through deficit spending and foreign loans from France would become the foundation of deep running imperial intersections between Russia and France. These imperial intersections would become even more deeply rooted due to developments in the contemporaneous international situation that would bring France and Russia together in a formal alliance. This would, in turn, result in direct French influence in the construction of Russian railways, which were indelibly linked to rest of Russia's industrial economy.

The International Setting, the Franco-Russian Alliance and Building Imperial Intersections

The French government's influence upon the construction of Russian railroads illustrates the intricacies of imperial intersections. The French interest in Russian railways was the confluence of diplomatic, legal and financial relationships with the Russian Empire to achieve its geopolitical goals. The French government, motivated by international Great Power politics, used loans combined with treaty stipulations to persuade Russia to construct railways that were of primarily strategic value and had little economic value. This financial relationship and treaty stipulations also bound French war planning and international position to the Russian railways. The Russian Empire's financial needs for industrialization gave potency to French influence on the railways. Russia did not have the domestic capital required to self-fund her railroad ambitions. France was also in need of an ally after her defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871. This international situation would culminate in an alliance between the two powers.

The alliance would not merely provide one-sided French influence over the Russian Empire but, would bind the foreign policy interests of France with the ability of the Russian Empire to the efficiency of the Russian railway network. The treaties appeared to further the interests of France more so than her Russian ally. French financial leverage, though not explicitly mentioned in diplomatic cables, was significant consideration in the minds of policy makers and a likely explanation for Russian acquiescence to particular stipulations to which it was reluctant to commit. The Franco-Russian treaties were an important step in the increasing complexity of imperial trajectories between the two powers.

This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the Russian Empire's search for foreign loans and the situation which paved the way for the coming together of Russia and France and

the forging of the Franco-Russian alliance. The signing of *l'alliance Franco-Russe* and the later *convention militaire*, which was added itself added upon in 1899, gave France the diplomatic and legal mechanism as well as the foreign policy and security needs to influence the construction of Russian railroads. This chapter will discuss the international situation that led to the coming together of France and Russia, the dire financial situation of Russia and events that precipitated France's financial leverage on Russia, and the treaty mechanisms that bound French interests to the Russian railways.

The international position of the French Third Republic after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871 was one of diplomatic isolation. France's foreign policy after her defeat by the newly unified Germany until the First World War was heavily driven by fears of German power.¹⁵² France became isolated from the other Great Powers and urgently needed an ally.¹⁵³ To France's east Bismark's Europe, a significant aspect of which was the Three Emperor's League, seemed unshakable. The Three Emperor's League was an alliance between The German Reich, Austria-Hungary, and the Russian Empire.¹⁵⁴ To France's west the colonial competition with the British Empire had become inflamed. The competition between France and Britain over colonial expansion in Africa and the Middle East was escalating. The colonial expansion of the two powers was on a collision course that collided in Egypt in 1889. France was isolated and desperately needed an ally.

The collapse and the official dissolution of the Three Emperors League in 1887 yielded an unlikely but strategically fortuitous ally for France. The Triple Alliance between Germany,

¹⁵² D. N. Colins, "The Franco-Russian Alliance and the Russian Railways 1891-1914," *The Historical Journal* 4 (1973): 777.

¹⁵³ Charles W. Porter, "The Career of Théophile Delcassé" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1936), M. B. Hayne, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

¹⁵⁴ George F. Kenan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) 40-59.

Austria Hungary and Italy against Russia and later France was first signed in 1882 and became the primary orientation of Germany and Austria Hungary after 1887.¹⁵⁵ The fissure between Russia and the other former members of the Three Emperors League also resulted in an abrupt closing off of Berlin, hitherto a provider of foreign loans to Russia, as a source of foreign loans for the Russian Empire.¹⁵⁶ In 1887 the international situation in Europe was optimal for attracting the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire together into an alliance.

France began its courtship of the Russian Empire by allowing a Russian loan to be floated on Paris markets. In 1887, a Russian delegation was sent to Paris to negotiate a loan from a group of French financiers. This was the first substantial loan Russia had floated in France.¹⁵⁷ On 12 November 1888, it was reported in a French diplomatic communiqué that a large French loan to Russia of 500 million francs and the conversion of an 1877 loan was agreed upon, a deal that met with disapproval in Berlin.¹⁵⁸ It was also remarked in the French diplomatic documents that this loan signified the binding of Russian and French interests: “This loan whose success is certain...has for us the advantage of fortunately being French and cements our interest with good relations with Russia.”¹⁵⁹

Sergei Witte remarked that,

“Hitherto the French government and the French financial community had not looked favorably on having financial dealings with us, in part because of our friendship with Germany and in part because of memories of the Sebastopol [Crimean] War. But since the accession of Emperor Alexander III we had begun to recognize that the tradition of blind unity with Germany had outlived its day and were slowly moving toward an

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Veit Valentin, *Bismarck's Aussenpolitik von 1871-1890* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte m. b. H., 1922) 11-14

¹⁵⁶ Kenan, *Bismarck*, 223-227.

¹⁵⁷ Count Sergei Witte. “The Memoirs of Count Sergei Witte,” ed. Sydney Hargrave, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990) 128-29.

¹⁵⁸ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914): Origines de la Guerre de 1914*, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1938) Ser. 1 Tom 7, No. 267. 277-8 (hereafter referred to as *DDF*)

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“Cet emprunt, dont le succès est certain... a pour nous cet avantage que son caractère est bien français et qu'il cimente par l'intérêt nos bons rapports avec la Russie.”

alliance with France. As a result, the French money market was opening up for us, at a time when the English money market, once open to us, was now less open.”¹⁶⁰

The French diplomatic corps also noted with interest the diplomatic implications and opportunities of the loan to Russia and that it could possibly be a remedy to France’s diplomatic isolation. It is noted with interest that the loan irritated Germany and attracted a lot of negative press in Berlin while in St. Petersburg the loan was a huge success in the Russian Press. The paper *Novoye Vremya* in Russia was reported to have written that they were glad to hear of the loan because it freed the Russian financial administration from the yoke of Germany to which Russia was held for twenty years.¹⁶¹ It was also noted that *Novoye Vremya* had remarked that the French loans showed that France sympathized with Russia and that the Russian Empire would never have to return to the humiliating terms of German loans. More interestingly the diplomatic cables note that *Novoye Vremya* remarked that the French loans restored the dignity of a great power.¹⁶² Finally, the French diplomatic documents note that both the Russian loan floated in Paris and the four German loans in 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1874 that France agreed to convert were largely for trains. This was said to present opportunities for France.¹⁶³ These loans became the first link in French interest in the Russian railways. The goodwill sewn in Russia, deliberately and intentionally by France through financial gestures, laid the ground work for a formal alliance that contributed to attracting the French Third Republic together in a formal alliance. This financial relationship would be the first of the important aspects of the imperial intersections between France and Russia and French influence on the construction of Russian railways.

¹⁶⁰ Harcave, *Sergie Witte*, 128.

¹⁶¹ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 7, No. 289. 296-297.

¹⁶² *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 8, No. 11. 13.

¹⁶³ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 7, No. 351. 367-368, No. 377. 401-402.

The Franco-Russian alliance evolved in three phases. The first was an initial agreement, the second a military convention and the third was a later addition to the military convention that profoundly expanded its scope. It should be noted that these treaties were kept under strict secrecy. The alliance was preceded by a general rapprochement between France and Russia but in 1890 the two powers began to move toward an official alliance. The courting process for the alliance started with invitations between the two general staffs to observe military maneuvers.¹⁶⁴ Actual discussions of an agreement between France and Russia began in August of 1890 with a dispatch from M. de Laboulaye, ambassador of France in St. Petersburg, to M. Ribot, the French minister of foreign affairs.¹⁶⁵ After about a year of negotiation and missions a Franco-Russian agreement was signed in August of 1891.¹⁶⁶ It is interesting to note that this initial agreement was approved by, but not signed by either the President of France or Emperor Alexander III but by French Minister Ribot, and Russian Foreign Minister Nikolai Girs.¹⁶⁷

The language of the agreement was not very specific but did contain the provisions that would create French interest in the Russian railways. Furthermore, it set the foundation for more binding and detailed provisions in the *convention militaire*, and its later addendum. Ribot reported in a letter in March of 1891 that *l'entente cordiale* between France and Russia ensured the peace of Europe and balance of arms with the Triple Alliance.

“The *entente cordiale* which is happily established between France and Russia is the best guarantee of peace. Since the Triple Alliance disrupts with armaments, the intimate harmony of the two countries it is necessary to maintain in Europe a just balance of forces.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Georges Michon and Norman Thomas, *The Franco-Russian Alliance 1891 – 1917*, (New York: Macmillan Co: 1929) 17.

¹⁶⁵ Ministère des Affaires Étrangères *Documents Diplomatiques: L'Alliance Franco-Russe*, (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1918) No. 1. 1-2. (hereafter referred to as DDAFR.)

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid* No 18, page 17.

¹⁶⁷ Michon and Thomans, *Alliance*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ DDAFR, No.2. 3.

Ribot wrote in July 1891 that the recent reaffirmation of the Triple Alliance fortified a French alliance with Russia because it assured the maintenance of the peace and, "...a certain balance between the forces of Europe."¹⁶⁹ Ribot's letter in July went on to elaborate the means of maintaining the peace and the equilibrium of forces in Europe – simultaneous mobilization. Ribot wrote that,

... It would be understood that, if peace were actually threatened by the initiative of one of the powers of the Triple Alliance, France and Russia would take without delay the measures necessary to prevent any surprise. In other words, France and Russia would agree to mobilize their forces simultaneously, as soon as a country bound by the Triple Alliance would mobilize its own.

The conditions of this simultaneous mobilization could also be the subject of an agreement to be established between the staffs of the two countries.

We believe that an arrangement concluded in these words is all we can wish in the present state of Europe. It would attest at once to our peaceful intentions and the commitment of the two friendly nations not only to consult, if any, on any matters that may arise in Europe, but also be ready to repel any attack that would be attempted against any of them."¹⁷⁰

Ribot outlined that any agreement between Russia and France would have as its primary focus, a defensive agreement against the Triple Alliance. The two powers would take measures without delay to prevent a surprise attack on either France or Russia from any power of the Triple Alliance. This would entail a simultaneous mobilization of forces in France and Russia at the

L'entente cordiale qui s'est établie si heureusement entre la France et la Russie est la meilleure garantie de la paix. Tandis que la triple alliance se ruine en armements, l'accord intime des deux pays est nécessaire pour maintenir en Europe une juste pondération des forces.

¹⁶⁹DDAFR, No. 4. 4-5.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*

"...il serait entendu que, si la paix était effectivement menacée par l'initiative d'une des puissances de la triple alliance, la France et la Russie prendraient sans aucun retard les mesures nécessaires pour prévenir toute surprise. En d'autres termes, la France et la Russie se mettraient d'ores et déjà d'accord pour mobiliser simultanément leurs forces, dès qu'un des pays liés par la triple alliance mobiliserait les siennes.

Les conditions de cette mobilisation simultanée pourraient d'ailleurs être l'objet d'une entente à établir entre les états-majors des deux pays.

Nous pensons qu'un arrangement conclu dans ces termes est tout ce que nous pouvons souhaiter dans l'état actuel de l'Europe. Il attesterait tout à la fois nos dispositions pacifiques et la ferme volonté des deux nations amies non seulement de s'entendre, le cas échéant, sur toute question qui viendrait à surgir en Europe, mais encore de se tenir prêtes à repousser toute attaque qui serait tentée contre l'une d'elles."

first sign of mobilization by any power bound by the Triple Alliance. This, Ribot thought, would be the basis for a formal agreement or alliance between the two powers which would demonstrate their commitment to maintaining peace.

The idea of simultaneous mobilization of the two powers in the face of threats from the Triple Alliance with the goal of maintaining peace in Europe would be prominent in the final incarnation of the agreement signed by Ribot and Girs later that year in August. On July 24, 1891 Ribot drafted a preliminary version of the agreement which he sent to ambassador Laboulaye in Saint Petersburg. Ribot specified that the treaty was directed at counter balancing the recently renewed Triple Alliance, neutralizing the danger the Alliance posed to the maintenance of peace in Europe and was meant to be peaceful and defensive.¹⁷¹ Ribot ended the draft as follows:

“They (Russia and France) would, no doubt, to ensure this result, to agree on the following points:

Because of the *entente cordiale* between the two powers,
The Governments will consult on any issues that might jeopardize the peace in Europe.

It is further understood that if one of the Powers of the Triple Alliance were to mobilize its forces, France and Russia, without needing to consult in advance, will mobilize immediately and simultaneously their own forces.”¹⁷²

In early August Girs drafted a second version of the agreement, which would significantly influence the final version that would later be signed by himself and Ribot. Girs’s draft advanced two points,

¹⁷¹*Ibid.* No. 6. 5-7.

¹⁷²*Idid.* No. 6. 7.

“Il leur suffirait, sans doute, pour assurer ce résultat, de convenir des points suivants:

En raison de l'entente cordiale qui existe entre les deux pays,

Les Gouvernements se concerteront sur toutes questions qui pourraient mettre en cause le maintien de la paix en Europe. Il est d'ailleurs entendu que, si l'une des Puissances de la triple alliance venait à mobiliser ses forces, la France et la Russie, sans avoir besoin de se concerter au préalable, mobiliseraient immédiatement et simultanément les leurs.”

“1 ° To define and devote the entente cordiale between them [Russia and France] to willingness to contribute to a mutual agreement to peacekeeping which forms the object of their best wishes, the two Governments say they will consult on any issue that would put into question the general peace;
2 ° In the event that this peace would indeed be in danger and especially for those where one party is threatened with assault, both parties agree to adopt immediate and simultaneous measures by the two Governments.”¹⁷³

Girs's agreement draft stipulated that the proposed agreement between Russia and France is in direct response to the renewal of the Triple Alliance and the perception that Great Britain's orbit was steadily drifting towards that of the Triple Alliance. The agreement states that this international situation necessitated an agreement with France and Russia to maintain the peace of Europe. It also stated that to safeguard the peace, the governments had formulated two points: 1.) to forge a mutual agreement for maintaining the peace in Europe, and that the two governments would consult with one another on all matters that put the general peace of Europe into question. 2.) That to ensure the peace, if either or both parties were threatened with attack, both parties agree to undertake counter measures immediately and simultaneously.¹⁷⁴

It is noteworthy that the wording of the agreement from Girs omitted the definite provisions for general military mobilization. It was the intention of the Russian Empire to avoid specific provisions in the agreement that would have her dragged into some colonial adventure of the French.¹⁷⁵ The mobilization provisions would be made explicit and become a major part of the *convention militaire*. In the initial agreement France had attempted to pursue a military commitment from the Russian Empire that Girs managed to evade. The *convention militaire*

¹⁷³DDAFR, No. 17. 15-16.

¹⁹ Afin de définir et consacrer l'entente cordiale qui les unit et désireux de contribuer d'un commun accord au maintien de la paix qui forme l'objet de leurs vœux les plus sincères, les deux Gouvernements déclarent qu'ils se concerteront sur toute question de nature à mettre la paix générale en cause;

²⁹ Pour le cas où cette paix serait effectivement en danger et spécialement pour celui où l'une des deux parties serait menacée d'une agression, les deux parties conviennent de s'entendre sur les mesures dont la réalisation de cette éventualité imposerait l'adoption immédiate et simultanée aux deux Gouvernements.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.* No. 17. 15-16.

¹⁷⁵ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 34.

would give France that binding military commitment. It should be noted that the agreement was not intended by either side to be an overwhelming commitment but rather a finite one by the powers for action in specific circumstances.¹⁷⁶ It should also be noted that the agreement concerned itself not only with the Triple Alliance but also paid specific attention to Great Britain.

In February of 1892, negotiations between the two governments resumed concerning a more formal military convention.¹⁷⁷ From the outset, the French government considered the agreement with Russia as insufficiently binding and only a stepping stone towards further commitments from the Tsar.¹⁷⁸ Negotiations concerning the military convention began in February 1892 until the Tsar's final approval in December, 1893. The *convention militaire* in 1893 and the update in 1899 would bind the Russian Empire to specific military obligations that hinged upon rapid mobilization that depended upon the state of the Russian railways. The wording of this treaty was a significant factor for French leverage in Russian railroad construction but far from being the solely dominant issue. The tone and process of the discussion was also indicative of the financial influence France had in these discussions.

The military convention elaborated the military obligations of the two powers to one another. The final draft of the treaty signed in December, 1893 read as follows,

“France and Russia, being alike animated by a sincere desire to preserve peace, and having no other object than to provide against the eventualities of a defensive war forced upon either of them by an attack by the armed forces of the Triple Alliance, have agreed to the following arrangements.

(i) If France is attacked by Germany or by Italy with Germany's support, Russia will bring all her available forces to bear against Germany. If Russia is attacked by Germany or by Austria with Germany's support, France will bring all her available forces to bear against Germany.

(ii) In the event of the mobilization of the armed forces of the Triple Alliance, or of one of its constituent Powers, France and Russia will, immediately [when] the news

¹⁷⁶ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 33.

¹⁷⁷ *DDAFR*, No. 28. 37.

¹⁷⁸ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 35.

reaches them and without waiting to consult together, forthwith and simultaneously mobilize the whole of their forces and move them as near as possible to the frontiers.

(iii) The number of troops available to be placed in the field against Germany will be 1,300,000 by France and from 700,000 to 800,000 by Russia. These troops will proceed to launch a vigorous and determined offensive, so that Germany will be forced to give battle in the East and West simultaneously.

(iv) The General Staffs of the armies of the two countries will at all times keep in close touch with the object of jointly planning and carrying out the measures referred to above. They will keep each other informed in peace-time of all particulars regarding the armies of the Triple Alliance that are now available or may hereafter come to their knowledge.

They will investigate and agree in advance on the best ways and means of keeping in touch with each other in war-time.

(v) France and Russia will not conclude peace separately.

(vi) This convention shall remain in force for so long as the Triple Alliance exists.

(vii) All the foregoing clauses shall be kept strictly secret.”¹⁷⁹

The opening paragraph of the treaty stated the primary goal of the treaty is to preserve the peace in Europe. The convention would ensure European peace by providing for a defensive war against the Triple Alliance, and emphasized its defensive nature. Of particular, direct

¹⁷⁹DDAFR, No. 71. 92., Translation by Michon page 53-24

“La France et la Russie, étant animées d'un égal désir de conserver la paix, et n'ayant d'autre but que de parer aux nécessités d'une guerre défensive, provoquée par une attaque des forces de la Triple Alliance contre l'une ou l'autre d'entre elles, sont convenues des dispositions suivantes :

1^o Si la France est attaquée par l'Allemagne, ou par l'Italie soutenue par l'Allemagne, la Russie emploiera toutes ses forces disponibles pour attaquer l'Allemagne.

Si la Russie est attaquée par l'Allemagne, ou par l'Autriche soutenue par l'Allemagne, la France emploiera toutes ses forces disponibles pour combattre l'Allemagne.

2^o Dans le cas où les forces de la Triple Alliance, ou d'une des Puissances qui en font partie, viendraient à se mobiliser, la France et la Russie, à la première annonce de l'événement, et sans qu'il soit besoin d'un concert préalable, mobiliseront immédiatement et simultanément la totalité de leurs forces, et les porteront le plus près possible de leurs frontières.

3^o Les forces disponibles qui doivent être employées contre l'Allemagne seront, du côté de la France, de 1,300,000 hommes, du côté de la Russie, de 700,000 à 800,000 hommes.

Ces forces s'engageront à fond, en toute diligence, de manière que l'Allemagne ait à lutter, à la fois, à l'Est et à l'Ouest.

4^o Les États-Majors des Armées des deux pays se concerteront en tout temps pour préparer et faciliter l'exécution des mesures prévues ci-dessus.

Ils se communiqueront, dès le temps de paix, tous les renseignements relatifs aux armées de la Triple Alliance qui sont ou parviendront à leur connaissance.

Les voies et moyens de correspondre en temps de guerre seront étudiés et prévus d'avance.

5^o La France et la Russie ne concluront pas la paix séparément.

6^o La présente Convention aura la même durée que la Triple Alliance.

7^o Toutes les clauses énumérées ci-dessus seront tenues rigoureusement secrètes.”

importance for Russian railroads in the future were articles 2 and 3 concerning the mobilization of the armies of the two powers.

Article 2 stated that at the first sign that the Triple Alliance or one of its signatories was mobilizing its forces, France and Russia would, without hesitation, immediately and simultaneously mobilize all of their forces as near as possible to their borders. Article 3 laid out specific troop numbers to be deployed by each power with the purpose of forcing Germany to fight a war in both the West and the East. It should be noted that the specific mobilization plans were much more specific and detailed. The entire convention hinged upon the rapidity with which Russia and France could mobilize their forces and bring them to bear on the German border. The signing of this convention immediately made the construction and efficiency of Russian railways a security concern for France and a legal and diplomatic obligation for the Russian Empire.

The tone and process of negotiations was also noteworthy for its discussion of the depth which Russian railway efficiency was beholden to French influence by treaty. As mentioned previously, Article 3 was originally much more in depth and specific in its military prescriptions. The original drafts illustrate the extent with which the French were concerned with the speed of mobilization in the event of war with the Triple Alliance.

In the time between the signing of the agreement between Russia and France in 1891 and the signing of the military convention, several versions of the convention were drafted. The editing process illustrates the diplomatic motivations and goals of the French and Russian governments in these negotiations. In February 1892 General Miribel of France submitted a first draft of the military convention with important differences from the final draft. Miribel's first draft contains extensive and specific figures for mobilization of the powers of the Triple

Alliance, as well as France and the Russian Empire.¹⁸⁰ Miribel estimated and proposed that France, in the case of general mobilization, could have 1,550,000 troops on the front line against Germany by the fourteenth day of mobilization.¹⁸¹ Miribel proposed that the Russian Empire could commit 1,600,000 troops.¹⁸² In this draft the number of troops and days of mobilization required for Italy, Austria, and Germany were also noted.¹⁸³ In this draft an approximation for days required for mobilization was absent only for the Russian Empire.

In later letters it became clear that France was urgently concerned with the specifics of Russian mobilization, particularly the speed of mobilization. Extracting a binding commitment to specific mobilization numbers and timetables was a valued goal for France in these negotiations. On February 11, 1892 Montebello sent to Ribot in St. Petersburg a letter that expressed concern that the concentration of Russian troops might be delayed in the event of war and questioned the accuracy of Russian estimates, "...that the concentration will not be completed until a date a bit later."¹⁸⁴ France's concern for Russia's mobilization abilities was again illustrated in a note from general Boisdeffre to the French Minister of War on August 10, 1892. In this note General Boisdeffre explored and outlined the vulnerabilities of the Russian Empire and mobilization plans of Germany and Austria and suggested Russian mobilization will be slow, possibly slower than expected, questions Russian commitment and, suggested that France needs more serious control of Russia's mobilization plans.¹⁸⁵ The attitude of the French was fear that they would be left to bear the brunt of a German or Triple Alliance attack and they

¹⁸⁰ *DDAFR*, No. 28. 37-41.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* 39.

¹⁸² *DDAFR*, No. 28.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *DDAFR*, No. 29. 45.

¹⁸⁵ *DDAFR*, No. 54. 75-77.

felt that the Russian Empire should be compelled to allocate considerable forces to the German front.¹⁸⁶

The Russian Empire's goals and interests differed from those of the French Republic in these negotiations. From the outset Tsar Alexander III attempted to evade commitment to the convention. He felt the terms of the 1891 agreement were sufficient and that a second military convention was unnecessary.¹⁸⁷ The Tsar's staff involved in the negotiations also wanted to avoid definite commitments, particularly mobilization specifics. The Russian general Obruchev adamantly objected to specifics in the convention.¹⁸⁸ Girs, the Russian Foreign Minister, preferred a possible supplementary agreement as opposed to an official military convention, and during the negotiations, persisted in attempting to evade clear and specific commitments.¹⁸⁹ The Russian government also objected to the primary focus against Germany.¹⁹⁰

As the final draft of the convention illustrates, the French government achieved the majority of their diplomatic objectives, where as the Russian Empire appeared to fold on almost all points including the actual signing of the convention. The Russian Empire managed to reduce the level of specificity of military action and mobilization timetables and achieved a secrecy clause for which they had been pushing. The French managed to gain almost everything else they had wanted. The treaty was clearly focused on Germany and definitively obliged the Russian Empire to specific mobilization commitments. Montebello was particularly surprised and excited by how much France actually got with the convention.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 35.

¹⁸⁷ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 36-37.

¹⁸⁸ *DDAFR*, No. 42. 56.

¹⁸⁹ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 38.

¹⁹⁰ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 47.

¹⁹¹ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 54.

The *convention militaire* was certainly a diplomatic victory for the French Government. The French exerted leverage to exact concessions and binding commitments from the Russian Empire that the latter wanted to evade. The French Third Republic was almost solely responsible for the wording, and pressed Russia for commitments that it wished to avoid.¹⁹² The treaty was a creation of France that Russia was persuaded to accept, and not a treaty jointly crafted by the two powers. The treaty was a wish list of diplomatic goals of France and terms the Russian Empire was willing to tolerate.

The *convention militaire* and the change in the Russian Empire's attitudes that ultimately led to its approval are also important and are oddly absent from the diplomatic cables in the negotiations for the treaty.¹⁹³ Georges Michon, in his work on the Franco-Russian Alliance states that,

“ Throughout the documents, too, no mention is made of the financial factor which, nevertheless is the whole explanation of the abrupt changes in attitude on the part of the Russians and dominates the situation throughout, playing as it did an outstanding part in the minds of all those engaged in the negotiations. It is, in fact, essential to bear this constantly in mind to follow what is said, written and debated.

Yet they [Russia] had to swallow this treaty convention by reason, primarily, of the lamentable state of their finances, and, secondly, of their need, isolated in Europe as they were, of French support in Asia against Great Britain, their chief enemy along with Austria.”¹⁹⁴

Other collections of French diplomatic documents paid particular attention to the urgency of the financial situation in the Russian Empire and its need for several French loans. They also noted the diplomatic opportunities and implications of this financial relationship in the years leading up to the signing of the *convention militaire*. In 1888 France agreed to a handful of large loans to Russia and loan conversions of older German loans.¹⁹⁵ These first loans were heralded

¹⁹² Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 62.

¹⁹³ *DDAFR*.

¹⁹⁴ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 63-64.

¹⁹⁵ *DDF*, Ser. 1 Tom 7, No 277, No 275, No 282., Ser. 1 Tom 8, No 11.

by the Russian paper, *Novoye Vremya*, as freeing the Russian Empire from the yoke of the humiliating terms of German loans. The paper went on to emphasize the importance of four large French loans and stated that it showed the good will of France to Russia and, even stated that these loans “preserved the dignity of a great power.”¹⁹⁶ The paper also went as far as to state that the level of hostility the French loans to Russia were met with in Germany and Austria pushed their significance into the realm of the political.¹⁹⁷ One French diplomat, M. de Vauvineux, wrote a dispatch to M. Ribot and stated that French loans to Russia made the Franco-Russian alliance a done deal, regardless of a formal alliance.¹⁹⁸ While not mentioned in dispatches within the collection of diplomatic documents for the Franco-Russian agreement, other contemporaneous documents illustrate the influence that the financial relationship between Russia and France had in these treaty negotiations.

In 1899, negotiations began to amend the *convention militaire*. Theophile Delcassé, the new French Foreign Minister, left for St. Petersburg to meet with the Russian Foreign Minister Mouraviev and Tsar Nicholas II. The negotiations for this amendment were, in contrast to those for the original agreement and military convention; rather brief. Delcassé initiated this project in response to the French diplomatic disaster in the Fashoda Crisis. Another factor that motivated him had to do with his fears of the imminent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which would dissolve the Triple Alliance and, consequently, the military convention between France and Russia.¹⁹⁹ Delcassé wished to amend the agreement to assuage this concern as well as extend its scope beyond the life span of the Triple Alliance by adding the following clause:

“It has been decided that the military convention project undertaken by Count Montebello from 23 December 1893 to January 1894 will remain in force as long as the

¹⁹⁶ *DDF*, Ser. 1 Tom 7, No 289.

¹⁹⁷ *DDF*, Ser. 1 Tom 9, No 50.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Michon and Thomas, *Alliance*, 103., *DDFRA*, No. 92, No. 93, No. 94.

diplomatic agreement concluded to safeguard our common and permanent interests of the two powers.”²⁰⁰

A second addition of Delcassé’s to the alliance further expanded the scope of the alliance. In addition, it placed even more importance on the Russian railway network by increasing the likelihood of an international incident that would trigger the mobilization stipulations in the military convention. Delcassé’s second addition stated:

“The government of the Republic of France and the imperial government of Russia, always concerned with maintaining the general peace and the balance of power among the European powers.”²⁰¹

This addition expanded the military commitments to one another and the possibility that a situation might arise where they would be invoked. This sentence expands their role from uniting to fight a defensive war against the Triple Alliance to maintaining the peace and balance of power in Europe, whatever that might entail. This addition brought this treaty out from the confines of defensive war to include collaborative, preemptive and offensive military action. This final touch to the treaty created the need for France to exert its financial, diplomatic and political influence on the construction of Russian railways by making the state of the Russian railway network important to French foreign policy and international security.

The agreement and the later amended *convention militaire* created a diplomatic and legal commitment for the Russian Empire to take military action that would require an adequate railway network while binding French international security to the capabilities of the Russian railways which Russian military mobilization depended. The Russian Empire was now bound to

²⁰⁰DDFRA, No. 94. 130.

“Ils décident que le projet de Convention militaire, qui en a été le complément... celle de M. le Comte Montebello du 23 décembre 1893-4 janvier 1894 demeurera en vigueur autant que l'accord diplomatique conclu pour la sauvegarde des intérêts communs et permanents des deux pays.”

²⁰¹*Ibid.*

“Le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement impérial de Russie, toujours soucieux du maintien de la paix générale et de l'équilibre entre les forces européennes.”

provide rapid, fully mobilized military support to France in case of the mobilization of forces from the Triple Alliance, particularly Germany, and also in a preemptive venture to maintain the peace and neutralize perceived threats to the balance of power in Europe. The negotiation processes of these treaties also illustrated the tools for exacting the commitments from the Russian Empire. The abysmal state of Russian finances and her dependence on loans from France played a role in Russia's agreement to treaty stipulations and the predominance of French interpretations of them during the negotiation process. This financial leverage greatly influenced the decision of Alexander III and later Nicholas II to accept these agreements that were vastly advantageous for her ally France. The treaties and agreements bound Russia to military commitments in an age where mobilization speed was central to warfare, and depended wholly on rail transport. These treaties also bound French security to the capabilities of the Russian railway network. The agreements and treaties explicitly bound Russia to military commitments which implicitly obliged her to the construction and maintenance of an efficient railway infrastructure for rapid mobilization. The treaty with France would bind Russia to building railways she would not have otherwise constructed, oftentimes, at the direct behest of the French government whose security and foreign policy had become connected with the capacities of the Russian railways to quickly and effectively transport Russia's army to a theater of conflict. The complex mechanism of financial and legal leverage would be utilized by France in the building the Tashkent-Orenburg railway and, later, in the construction and upgrading of a series of railways to assuage French anxieties concerning Russia's ability to mobilize against Germany. These treaties obligated the Russian Empire to rapid military mobilization incase either Russia or France was attacked by a signatory of the Triple Alliance, or in the case of a preventive war, to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The Russian Empire's mobilization abilities hinged

upon the efficiency and capacity of her railway network to move her army. These treaties also bound French foreign policy and international security to the Russian railway network, something France was keenly aware of. Inability of the Russian Empire to mobilize rapidly diminished France's chances in a war against Germany and a perceived weakness of her ally by other powers also diminished France's foreign policy options. It was now imperative for France that the Russian railway network be able to accommodate mobilization timetables, and France would use its role as a primary source of foreign capital and loans as a bargaining chip to ensure the Russian Empire could meet these obligations. Russia's financial interests were bound to France as a source of foreign capital vital for the construction of railways and its industrialization drive. These signing of these treaties now bound the French foreign policy interests to the capabilities of the Russian railway network, which relied upon French foreign loans and upon which relied other industrial enterprises in Russia. The two empires had become irrevocably intertwined through financial relationships, treaty stipulations, foreign policy interests, and the international situation in Europe.

France, the Russian Railways and, Imperial Intersections in Action.

In the twilight of the nineteenth century, the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire became intertwined in a complex and profound set of imperial intersections. The Russian Empire began depending heavily on foreign capital, primarily from France for financial stability. The construction of its railroads became a lynchpin of Russian industrialization. In the 1890s Russia and France signed treaties that obliged both powers to rapid mobilization to aid the other in case of attack or for preventive action to maintain the balance of power in Europe. These treaties also bound the potency of French foreign policy, her international standing, and security in case of war to the abilities of the Russian railway network. France, being aware of this new security reality and of Russia's financial reliance on French loans and capital, began showing considerable interest in the construction of domestic railroads in the Russian Empire and on occasion significantly interfered in the planning and construction of Russian railways. The construction of a Tashkent-Orenburg railway, as well as increasing the capabilities of the Russian railway network to quickly funnel the Russian Army to the borders of Europe became of paramount interest to France.

The French preoccupation with Russian railroads began immediately after the signing of the Franco-Russian agreement and the military convention and continued until the outbreak of the First World War. France used the diplomatic and legal stipulations of its treaties with Russia, combined with its enormous financial leverage over the Russian Empire, to encourage the construction of strategic, rail lines in Russia. Of purely strategic value, these lines bolstered the mobilization abilities of the Russian military and also enhanced France's international position. It is important to note that these lines would not have been built if not for French interest. The

two notable instances of French power and influence in the construction of Russian railways were the Tashkent-Orenburg line in Central Asia, and in 1909, a series of lines and upgrades for Russian mobilization on the German border.

The Tashkent-Orenburg line constituted the first case of significant French influence in the construction of Russian railroads. France's interest in this line arose during the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway, the negotiations of the Franco-Russian agreement and, the military convention. Active French efforts to pressure Russia into constructing this particular line only began as a direct result of the Fashoda crisis in 1898, which was a diplomatic disaster for the French. France did not feel Russia had lived up to its commitments outlined in the treaties and began to feel it needed to force Russia to meet its treaty obligations. One way that France did this was by pressuring Russia to build the Tashkent-Orenburg railway which had little economic benefits for Russia but strategic benefits for putting pressure on British India through Afghanistan. The French overcame strong objections from the Minister of Finance, Count Sergei Witte, but won the support of the Russian Minister of War, Aleksey Kuropatkin, who eventually persuaded the Tsar to build the Tashkent-Orenburg line.

Initial French interest in the Trans-Siberian railway was first expressed in a diplomatic dispatch from October 9, 1890. In a letter from the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, Laboulaye to Ribot, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was noted that the completion of the Trans-Siberian without foreign capital would be impossible.²⁰² Foreign capital inevitably entailed French capital and, in 1890 France was recognized by the French diplomatic corps as the sole source of foreign funding for Russia. This report was essentially recognizing that construction of the Trans-Siberian was impossible without French loans. In 1890 France

²⁰² Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914): Origines de la Guerre de 1914*, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1938) Ser. 1 Tom 8, No. 178. 256. (hereafter referred to as *DDF*)

recognized her potential importance for completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway but expressed no plans to exploit this position.

On January 9, 1892 France first expressed its concerns about Russian mobilization of troops toward Germany. This document notes that the Russian Empire required a radical restructuring of their system of mobilization, including railways, and paid particular attention to their lacking means of transport.²⁰³ This French dispatch explicitly stated that the completion of strategic railways in Russia would be necessary to carry out the war plans of the two powers.²⁰⁴ It should be kept in mind that this was written before the conclusion of negotiations for the military convention which Laboulaye believed necessitated a second military convention.²⁰⁵

Sergei Witte, the primary source of opposition to French proposals for the Tashkent to Orenburg line, initially seemed a potential ally when appointed and someone who possibly optimize the mobilization abilities of Russia due to his preoccupation with railway construction. On August 30, 1892, Sergei Witte was appointed Finance Minister of Russia. The French noted that his ideas entailed taking state funds for the construction of railroads, and that this pleased them. Witte floated loans in France in 1892 and 1893 for funding railroads in Russia which also pleased the French.²⁰⁶ There was also discussion with Witte on the possibility of increasing military armaments and fortifications in the Russian Empire.²⁰⁷ However, by August of 1897, Sergei Witte fell out of favor with the French diplomats by trying to float a 250 million mark loan in Berlin which would break French financial power in Russia.²⁰⁸ As previously mentioned, France highly valued its role as a primary source for foreign capital into Russia, and also viewed

²⁰³ *DDF*, Ser. 1 Tom 8, No. 134.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 13, No. 290.

²⁰⁷ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 12, No 164.

²⁰⁸ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 13, No. 290.

the unraveling of Russia's financial relationship with Germany as a foreign policy victory. Sergei Witte would become an opponent of the Tashkent-Orenburg railway and the construction of strategic railways. Instead, he favored the construction of railways with economic value that would better serve Russia's industrialization.

Had it not been for the Fashoda Crisis in 1898, France may not have engaged the mechanisms required to pursue the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg railway and may have just remained merely frustrated and concerned about Russia's mobilization capabilities. The Fashoda crisis was the catalyst that ramped up French efforts to influence the construction of strategic Russian railways and strengthen its mechanisms for doing so. For years French and English colonial expansion had been on an intercept course in Africa. In the summer of 1898 France and England collided in Fashoda, a small town in Egypt. France sent the Liotard Mission organized by French Foreign Minister Theophile Delcassé to secure an outlet on the Nile River for French colonial possessions and later sent captain Marchand to reinforce it. Marchand made his way into the old Egyptian province of Khartoum and after thirty months of traveling through Egyptian swamps, he arrived in the town of Fashoda on July 10, 1898. On September 2, 1898 General Kitchener of England won a battle at Omdurnon giving him effective control over the whole of Egypt.²⁰⁹

Delcassé extremely alarmed that England would send gunships up the Nile and overwhelm the much smaller French force. Kitchener advanced and met with Marchand and insisted the latter leave. Both were courteous but neither withdrew. Thus war seemed almost inevitable. Delcassé sought a diplomatic solution and thought compromise could be reached. The British Lord Salisbury refused to compromise and seemed bent on forcing France to back down or go to war. Delcassé communicated to Britain that if war came she would not be alone

²⁰⁹ Charles W. Porter, "The Career of Théophile Delcassé" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1936), 130-131.

because of the Franco-Russian alliance. It was accepted that England was at an overwhelmingly superior position in the event of armed conflict. Even the French acknowledged if a conflict ignited they would be overwhelmed in Egypt and the nightmare scenario of their fleet being completely swept from the Mediterranean was quite possible. On November 3, 1898 France decided to withdraw from Fashoda and recall Marchand. The Fashoda crisis ended in a diplomatic disaster for France and generated questions concerning the reliability of her Russian ally.²¹⁰

The Fashoda fiasco illustrated to France that Russia was not as reliable or capable of an ally as she would like, enraging the French and calling into question the usefulness of the alliance. During the crisis France had hoped the Russian Empire would come to her aid but, at the time the current incarnation of the alliance was directed at the powers of the Triple Alliance and promised dubious assistance if any at all against England. Delcassé was, however, shocked by the lengths the Russian Empire went to avoid involvement in the dispute. The Tsar issued a manifesto in favor of a brokered peace conference and openly advertised across Europe the Russian Empire's utter indifference to the situation in Africa. Russia was not bound by treaty to help her ally but France was disappointed and enraged to the extent she felt her ally had so readily abandoned her. The Franco-Russian Alliance was at its nadir at the end of the Fashoda crisis.²¹¹

The Fashoda Crisis caused France to take a more involved and intrusive interest in ensuring that her ally, Russia, was committed and capable of aiding France in case of war. This inspired Delcassé to travel to St. Petersburg to expand the *convention militaire* in 1899. France insisted that that Russia upgrade her mobilization capabilities, going so far as to confront the

²¹⁰ Porter, *Career*, 131-139.

²¹¹ Porter, *Career*, 137-141.

Tsar on the matter. It became clear to France during the Fashoda Crisis that Russia was not prepared for war.²¹² In January 1899, Lt. Colonel Moulin of France reported in a letter a meeting held with Tsar Nicholas II concerning Russian inaction during Fashoda. In this letter Moulin reported that the Emperor apologized for Fashoda but defended the Russian response. Moulin relayed that the Emperor emphasized that there was little that Russia could have done to threaten England.²¹³ In a second letter on the same subject, Moulin quotes the Tsar as saying that Russia would help wherever possible and had the power.²¹⁴

The French, early in January 1899, had already taken interest in Russia's ability to assist her in a war against England. France had already determined where Russia could help and what needed to be done to ensure Russia had the power to do so. Ribot wrote to the French Minister of War, Freycinet that if Russia constructed a railway on the Tran-Siberian network that connected Tashkent with Orenburg Russia would be able, in two years and with relatively small expenditure, to concentrate 200,000 men in Afghanistan to threaten Herat in British India.

“...with a small decision, and for a relatively small expenditure, because it would bring results, the Russians would be ready in two years, linking Tashkent by rail with Orenburg, to concentrate 200,000 men on the border of Afghanistan Kouchk, four marches (the distance an army could march in one day) from Herat.”²¹⁵

In this letter, Ribot also noted with disappointment that this line would not be built and that the Trans-Caspian railway would remain isolated from the rest of the empire: “As long as this line is not be built, the Trans-Caspian railway remains isolated from the rest of the network of the

²¹² Porter, *Career*, 137.

²¹³ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 3.

²¹⁴ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 52.

²¹⁵ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 3. 13.

“...avec un peu de décision, et pour une dépense relativement minime, en raison des résultats qu'elle procurerait, les Russes seraient en état dans deux ans, en reliant Tachkent par une voie ferrée avec Orenbourg, de concentrer 200.000 hommes sur la frontière d'Afghanistan Kouchk, à quatre marches d'Hérat.”

Empire ...”²¹⁶ Ribot noted that Russia had decided to instead build a rail line from Orenburg to Omsk for commercial reasons, and that this line would have little military value. Ribot stated that the Russian finance minister Witte feared that without the Omsk-Orenburg line Russian markets would become pinched. It is notable that Ribot recognized that the Tashkent-Orenburg line was not in the best economic interests of Russia.

“But the first direction (Tashkent-Orenburg) is by far the most advantageous from the point of view of the military. This line has the promises of large profits, because it will drain trade from Central Asia and will bring the goods to Libau, if the link is to Orenburg or has Arkhangelsk and Murmansk in the area of the White Sea, the link in Omsk, according to the project by the Minister of Finance, who wants to divert trade from the center of Siberia in Russia, so that markets do not get squeezed.”²¹⁷

Later in January of 1899 Lt. Col. Moulin of France wrote to the French Minister of War, Freycinet, about further exploring the prospect of the building Tashkent-Orenburg railway. Moulin then reported that the Russian government was exploring the issue of additions to the Trans-Caspian Railway. He noted that the Russian army’s general staff is interested in making a survey of rail line possibilities in Central Asia and, appeared amenable to the construction of a Tashkent-Orenburg line and appreciates the strategic value of the line. The Minister of War, Aleksey Kuropatkin, and the Russian Foreign Minister, Mikhail Muravyov, were both reported to have been in support of the line.²¹⁸

French documents indicate, however, very significant obstructions and opposition to the Tashkent-Orenburg line from the Minister of Ways and Communications, and the minister of finance – the heads of two ministries with significantly more authority, jurisdiction and power in

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 3.

²¹⁷ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 3. 4.

“Mais la première direction est de beaucoup la plus avantageuse au point de vue militaire. Cette ligne promet du reste de beaux bénéfices, car elle drainera le commerce de l’Asie centrale et en amenera les marchandises soit a Libau, si le rattachement se fait a Orenbourg, soit a Arkhangelsk et a la cote de Mourman dans la Mer Blanche si le rattachement se fait a Omsk, suivant le projet du Ministre des Finances, qui veut détourner le commerce de la Sibérie du centre de la Russie, pour que les marchés n'en soient pas écrasés.”

²¹⁸ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 43. 13.

the construction of Russian railways. Moulin reports that the minister of ways and communications Prince Mikhail Khilkoff, expressed that it would not be possible, for at least three years, to approve allocations for new lines on the Trans-Siberian that were not economic in nature.²¹⁹

“Prince Hilckoff However, in this conversation, has suggested that it was thought that no allowance for new construction of railways would be considered for three years, besides those already in business, including the Trans-Siberian.”²²⁰

A dispatch from the French ambassador Montebello describes finance minister Sergei Witte’s objections to railways. He states that Witte vehemently defended his own railway plans based on economic benefits and that it would create insignificant delays in mobilization. These delays were felt by the French and military establishment to create problems that would make effective mobilization impossible.²²¹

“...Witte defended with great energy the line that, in his view, presents the most immediate benefits in economic terms. One argument is that his project, while having great advantages in terms of wealth within the country, reached at the same time the desired strategic goal by bringing together the Asian Railway network in the Central Trans-Siberian. He admits that it is true, the way be longer, but only by five days. Yet it is precisely this difference that creates, in military terms, the complications that make it virtually impossible. ”²²²

²¹⁹DDF, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 48. 77.

²²⁰*Ibid.*

“Toutefois le prince Hilckoff, dans cette conversation, a donné à entendre qu'il n'y avait pas à songer, avant trois ans, à aucune allocation nouvelle pour des constructions de voies ferrées, en dehors de celles déjà enterprises, notamment du transsibérien.”

²²¹DDF, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 128.

²²²DDF, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 128. 200.

“...M. de Witte défendra avec la plus grande énergie la ligne qui, à ses yeux, présente les avantages les plus immédiats au point de vue économique. Un des arguments qu'il fait valoir est que son projet, tout en ayant de grands avantages en ce qui concerne la richesse intérieure du pays, atteint en même temps le but stratégique désiré en réunissant les chemins de fer d'Asie au réseau central du transsibérien. La voie serait il est vrai, avoué-t-il, plus longue, mais de cinq jours seulement. Or c'est cette différence qui crée précisément, au point de vue militaire, des complications qui la rendant pratiquement impossible.”

In the first few months of 1899 the initial outlook for the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg line was not optimistic. The French diplomats believed that at the current time realizing this goal, that is very important to France, was impossible.

"This is indeed the breakpoint of the question, as I have heard the side of all the military authorities, and my investigation, ultimately, led to this sad fact, that despite the best intentions, it is impossible to realize for the moment a work that French policy would be interested to see completed urgently. " ²²³

The French government did not, however, abandon its goals of persuading the Russian government to construct the Tashkent-Orenburg line. The French government believed that it could utilize its financial leverage to incentivize the Russian government to construct this line. Ribot speculated, in January of 1899, that a French loan of 50 million francs could possibly persuade Russia to consider construction of the Tashkent – Orenburg line.

"... to spend 50 million rubles [on the railroad] is the strongest objection, because Russia currently feels embarrassment regarding its finances and, because of the new needs it must face." ²²⁴

Moulin also wrote later in January that loans or financial incentives might get the Russians to construct this line but, the proposed loan was increased to 150-160 million francs. ²²⁵

"There is however a solution to this situation. In sum, the construction of the Orenburg-Tashkent is not, for a country with our financial resources, an extraordinary effort. This is an advance of 150 to 160 million francs to do [this] and, in 1901, we would have found our safety, instead of waiting indefinitely...." ²²⁶

²²³ *Ibid.*

"C'est là en effet le point d'arrêt de la question, comme me l'ont fait entendre de leur côté toutes les autorités militaires ; et mon enquête, en fin de compte, a abouti à cette triste constatation, qu'avec les meilleures intentions, il est impossible de réaliser pour le moment une œuvre que la politique française serait intéressée à voir achevée d'urgence."

²²⁴ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 3. 3-4.

"...quoique les 50.000.000 les roubles à dépenser soient la plus forte objection, en raison de la gêne que la Russie éprouve dans ses finances en ce moment-ci..."

²²⁵ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 48.

²²⁶ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 48. 78.

"Il y a cependant une solution à cette situation. En somme, la construction de la ligne Orenbourg-Tachkent n'est pas, pour un pays qui possède nos ressources financières, un effort extraordinaire. C'est une avance de 150 à 160

In April of 1899 Ambassador Montebello wrote to the French foreign Minister Theophile Delcassé summarized both opposing and supporting arguments for the rail line. He also wrote of the dire financial situation of the Russian Empire and suggested that France make the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg line a condition of a future French loan.

“As I indicated to you a few days ago, it is indispensable that I be attached to any mission of the Republic Government where an appeal is made to French credit in the when the present needs of the imperial government are pressing and where the construction of certain railways urgently needs its attention....

... This is, therefore, for the adoption of this project we must tighten our efforts: We must similarly, where our credit would be called upon, to make it a condition of our financial support that a portion of the advanced funds be used for the construction of the sole line [Tashkent-Orenburg] that interests us at present....

... The construction of the line whose significance I have reported to you, and which connects the railways of the Trans-Caspian to the core network, following the most direct route through Orenburg and Tashkent is what solely interests us today.”²²⁷

The French government had a clear and singular interest in the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg Railway. The French also explicitly stated that they would use their financial leverage to influence the Russian Empire to construct this line.

French influence also reached into the bureaucratic debate concerning the Tashkent-Orenburg Railway. The French were willing to assist their allies in the Russian government, specifically the Minister of War Kuropatkin, in persuading the Emperor to approve the Tashkent-Orenburg railway. Montebello noted to Delcassé that even though Kuropatkin supported the

millions de francs à faire et, dès 1901, nous aurions retrouvé notre sécurité, au lieu d'attendre aux calendes grecques...”

²²⁷DDF, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 128. 199.

“Ainsi que je vous l'ai fait savoir, il y a quelques jours, il était indispensable que je fusse fixé sur les intentions du Gouvernement de la République, au cas où un appel serait fait au crédit de la France dans un moment où les besoins du gouvernement impérial sont pressants, et où la construction de certaines lignes de chemin de fer s'impose d'urgence à son attention.

C'est donc à l'adoption de ce projet que doivent tendre tous nos efforts : nous devrions même, dans le cas où il serait fait appel à notre crédit, poser comme condition de notre concours financier qu'une partie des fonds que nous consentirions à avancer fût employée à la construction de la seule ligne qui nous intéresse.

La construction de la ligne dont je vous ai signalé l'importance, et qui réunirait les chemins de fer de la Transcaspienne au réseau central, en suivant la voie la plus directe par Orenbourg et Tachkent est celle qui nous intéresse seule aujourd'hui.”

Tashkent-Orenburg line, he might not have the ability to triumph over Finance Minister Witte's arguments and persuade the tsar. Montebello reported that he feared Kuropatkin would not deliver his report with the energy to persuade Nicholas II. Montebello said he advised Kuropatkin that it was essential that he defend his case report emphatically and that it was necessary that his arguments were strong and conclusive to respond to those of Witte. Montebello advised the Russian Minister of War that he should keep his report and arguments secret until the he had to produce them. Montebello also reported that he described to Kuropatkin the terms upon which the French government could help him and assured him that he had the support of the French government.²²⁸

By May 1901 Emperor Nicholas II had, despite objections, given his approval and insisted upon the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg railway for strategic reasons.²²⁹ The Emperor appeared to have accepted the arguments of Kuropatkin over those of the Minister of Finance Sergei Witte. After learning of the Emperor's approval of the line the French government authorized a loan of 425 million francs - a notable increase from the previous amount of 150-160 million. Sergei Witte noted in his memoirs that the Emperor approved the railway over his objections and noted that the Ministry of War had influenced the Emperor's decision.²³⁰

It is not indicated conclusively in any of the diplomatic documents or the memoirs of statesmen exactly to what extent French influence persuaded Emperor Nicholas II to choose in favor of the Tashkent-Orenburg railway over alternative lines of more economic benefit. The role of French influence in the Emperor's decision could not have been insignificant. The

²²⁸ *DDF*, Ser. 1, Tom 15, No. 128. 200.

²²⁹ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 1, No. 239.

²³⁰ Count Sergei Witte. "The Memoirs of Count Sergei Witte," ed. Sydney Hargrave, (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990) 321.

French government expended significant effort, utilized multiple tools and utilized several avenues available to them to encourage the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg line. The French used their financial leverage in conjunction with arguments that Russia had demonstrated an inability to fulfill its treaty commitments and was obliged to build the line. The French even went so far as to assist the Russian Minister of War to ensure that his arguments in favor of Tashkent-Orenburg were as effective as possible in persuading the Emperor. Quantifying the weight French efforts had on the Emperor's decision is impossible but could not have been insignificant considering the great lengths to which the French government attempted to involve itself in the decision making process and to ensure a favorable outcome.

It is difficult to speculate how the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg line over the alternatives affected the Russian Empire or which would have been qualitatively better for the empire. However, the completion of the railway in Tashkent had significant consequences for the city. In the article, "Progress or Peril: Migrants and Locals in Russian Tashkent, 1906-14", the railway is explained to have had dramatic implications for the city. The author writes,

"Coming by the thousands, Russian settlers inundated the streets of Tashkent's "Russian section" in 1906. Unemployment, rural poverty, and repression in the central provinces drove these new arrivals to seek opportunities elsewhere. A recently completed rail line allowed settlers to escape harrowing treks across the steppe and desert land that separated the tsarist province of Turkestan from European Russia. Administrators and other privileged Russian in Tashkent, despite their minority status in the city and region as well as their initial enthusiasm over the railway, greeted their new compatriots with scorn. Poor, dirty and, in some cases, disease-ridden, recent migrants occupied all available housing in the Russian section, and squatted in old, dilapidated soldiers' barracks. They crowded the central market, Voskressinskii bazaar, pleading with Russian or Central Asian passer-by for employment. Peasants refused official pleas to move to the surrounding countryside. Tsarist officials working with new settlers complained of "moral torment" from their shock at having to deal with so many members of Russia's lower classes. By June, the city дума opened debate on enforcement of a ban on any movement to the capital city of Turkestan."²³¹

²³¹ Jeff Shadeo, "Progress or Peril: Migrants and locals in Russian Tashkent, 1904-1914," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland. (New York:Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 148.

The Tashkent-Orenburg railway caused tumult in the city by enabling large numbers of poor Russian's to flood into the city. This caused tension between the Russian colonial elites of Tashkent and the flood of poor Russians fleeing to the city. The influx of poor Russians entering the city enabled by the Tashkent-Orenburg railway even inspired the local elites to vote to ban any further relocation to the city.

The influx of poor Russian immigrants made the Russian elites of Tashkent seriously question the place of Russians in the Far East. Discussions over the relationships with the local Central Asian population and the newly arrived Russian peasants to imperial progress were undertaken by the Russian press Tashkent. The press discussed an incomplete civilizing mission and pointed to the newly arrived Russian poor as evidence that Russians had failed to transmit or even lost the tools for progress. Other articles in the Russian press in Tashkent cite the newly arrived peasants to question their superiority over the Central Asian population.²³² The author writes,

“...the colonial encounter was now appearing to demonstrate that Central Asians possessed certain qualities that distinguished them as more civilized than the Russian colonizers. As Russians overindulged in alcohol and showed no respect for law and order, Central Asians remained teetotalers and honored elders and leaders.”²³³

The influx of migrants into Tashkent forced the Russian elites of Tashkent to face, in their minds, the unflattering characteristics of the Russian poor. This encounter made the Russian elites question the inherent superiority of the Russian nation as bringer of civilization.

These rapid changes in Tashkent, both demographic and economic, also made the Russian colonial elites question their role in the empire. Officials in Tashkent came believe that St. Petersburg wanted to turn Turkestan into a supplier of raw goods instead of a center of

²³² Shadeo, “Progress or Peril,” 156.

²³³ *Ibid.*

diverse new industries. The local elites began to resent to St. Petersburg for this perceived use of Tashkent as merely a source of raw goods to be extracted to the capital and as a dumping ground for the empire's problems.²³⁴ These perceptions made the Russian elites in Tashkent deeply question their place in the empire. The author writes that,

“The Regional Statistical Committee stated in its 1912 report that, ‘the district is no more than a vast market of raw materials, and at the same time, a place for the sale of goods from Russian factories.’ A young Turkestan, at the mercy of central economic policy, had become no more than ‘colony’ (*koloniia*) of Russia.

Employing ‘colony’ in place of other terms in use for their region among Tashkent Russians, including ‘province’ (*krai*), ‘outlying region’ (*okraina*), or ‘homeland’ (*rodina*), was significant in contemporary Russian discourse. As early as the 1880s, Siberian regionalists used the term as pejorative to describe the results of central policies that shipped raw goods directly to the metropole, preventing the development of a balanced economy. ‘*Koloniia*’ came to symbolize the dependence of a region upon a center ignorant of its needs. In the nineteenth century, criticisms of the center focused on its neglect of Turkestan rather than any dependent relationship. Now, central interest had given Tashkent Russian one of their most deeply held desire – a railroad – but with it came subjection to St. Petersburg’s economic policy.”²³⁵

These changes in economic policy towards Tashkent forced the Russian elites to question their importance as valued center of the Russian Empire. Many resigned themselves to the reality that Tashkent was merely a colonial holding, of little importance to the empire beyond being a source for raw materials.

The Tashkent-Orenburg railway was the source of the massive migrations of poor Russians, and changes in economic policies towards Tashkent in St. Petersburg. The Tashkent-Orenburg railway facilitated changes that significantly altered the configurations of people in Tashkent, changed Russian elites’ perception of their place in the Russian Empire, and a shift in the center to colonial economic policies towards Tashkent. The Tashkent-Orenburg railway noticeably and significantly changed Tashkent’s place in the empire and its relationship with

²³⁴ Shadeo, “Progress or Peril,” 154-155.

²³⁵ Shadeo, “Progress or Peril,” 155-156.

center of the Russian Empire. It is significant that the railway that brought these changes to Tashkent was built due in no small part to the influence of a foreign power and ally, France.

The Tashkent-Orenburg railway was only the first of several strategic railway projects in the Russian Empire that interested the French government. In other cases, too, the French would use the same methods and reasoning implemented in the Tashkent-Orenburg line but with more directness and put greater pressure on the Russian government which was in an even more tenuous financial position than in 1898-1900 during the Tashkent-Orenburg debate. Renewed French interest in the construction of strategic railways in Russia began in 1906. This round of French interest differed importantly in scope from the Tashkent-Orenburg line. French efforts continued for a far more protracted amount of time and involved multiple lines and broad upgrades to the entire network as opposed to just one line.

French anxieties about the abilities of the Russian government to mobilize its forces were ran high in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05 and the consequent unrest that erupted throughout Russia. In January 1906 Moulin wrote Minister Étienne, then French Minister of War, expressing his concerns over the dire state of the Russian railways after the Russo-Japanese war.²³⁶ He wrote again in February with concerns that Russia would not be able to mobilize to meet the requirements of the military convention if war with Germany came.²³⁷ The French were incredibly concerned about Russian vulnerabilities and were alarmed at its seeming inability to assist in a war against Germany. The Russo-Japanese war had also left Russia in dire financial straits and desperate for money.

The consequences of the Russo-Japanese war also made French financial influence imposingly more potent. The Russo-Japanese War and the resulting unrest in 1905-07 left

²³⁶ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 9, No. 78. 119.

²³⁷ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 9, No. 294.

Russia with a disheveled financial situation and an empty treasury that was only rescued by a massive loan floated in France.²³⁸ The Russian empire was rescued in 1906 by the largest foreign loan ever floated anywhere at that time which totaled 2.750 billion francs.²³⁹ Count Sergei Witte, former Minister of Finance who was now serving as the first Prime Minister of Russia (1905-1906) in the newly created State Duma, considered this loan essential to the survival of Russia. He wrote in his memoirs,

“I was convinced that for Russia to survive the revolutionary crisis and for the Romanov dynasty to remain in power it was necessary quickly... to borrow enough money to tide us over for several years.

...Without the loan, the government might lose the freedom of action that it must have under any circumstances.

...Our loan was of extraordinary financial and political importance. Thanks to it Russia was able to maintain the gold standard... [and, it] enabled it (Russia) to recuperate from the ravages of war and revolution, providing the government with a monetary reserve that enabled it to cope with the problems it had to face in succeeding years.”²⁴⁰

Witte indicated in his memoirs that it was primarily he who negotiated the loans and, not the current Minister of Finance, Vladimir Kokovtsov. Witte recalls that he initially attempted to diversify this loan on German, American and British markets as well as French. During the negotiation process Germany denied Russia access to German markets, and following their lead the American banker, Morgan, backed out of the loan as well. Consequently, notes Witte, the loan was primarily French.²⁴¹

French financial leverage had increased drastically by floating to Russia the largest international loan of all time that was also vital to the operation, and arguably, even the survival of the Russian Government and the empire. French anxieties about the Russian Empire's ability to mobilize increased as dramatically as did foreign loans to Russia after the Russo-Japanese

²³⁸ Margaret Miller, *The Economic Development of Russia 1905-1914*, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1967), 116.

²³⁹ Witte, *Memoirs*, 571., Miller, *Development*, 117.

²⁴⁰ Witte, *Memoirs*, 561, 571.

²⁴¹ Witte, *Memoirs*, 565-571.

War. The combination of the intensified Russian reliance on French loans and French anxieties concerning Russian mobilization resulted in France becoming more brazen in expressing its interests in Russian railways.

In a dispatch dated 27 Jan, 1906 from General Moulin to the French Minister of War Étienne, Moulin remarked that the aforementioned loan would be very beneficial for French politics. He also noted that the loan would be an opportunity to realize certain military expenditures such as the building of railways. Moulin also notes that this new loan will be an opportunity to address the issue of the completion of the two agreed upon strategic railways in 1901, one being the Tashkent-Orenburg line. Moulin states that the Russian Treasury should not be allowed to tap into the French Market until these questions are answered.²⁴²

French Ambassador to Russia, Bompard, wrote to the French Foreign Minister that France should only approve the loan when certain conditions were met. He stipulated the condition that Russia work toward, “Maintaining the general peace and the balance of power in Europe as agreed in the diplomatic accords concluded for safeguarding the common and permanent interests of the two powers.”²⁴³ The diplomatic accords to which Bompard referred were the *convention militaire*, and its 1899 amendment. In November 1906 general Moulin reiterates to the new French Minister of War Picquart that Russia was currently unable to meet its treaty obligations. He says that Russia lacks the needed materials for railways and, Russia needs a few years of respite before it can help in war against Germany. He concluded that the general state of Russian preparedness was poor and that if war came, Russia would

²⁴²DDF, Ser. 2, Tom 9, No. 78. 119.

²⁴³DDF, Ser. 2, Tom 10, No. 100. 152.

struggle.²⁴⁴ Moulin reported in December that Russia may have a lot of power on paper but says that in reality she is far weaker.²⁴⁵

French interest in Russia's railways and mobilization abilities reemerged in 1908. The tone of French insistence on the construction of strategic railways in Russia became markedly bolder after the mammoth loans floated in France after the Russo-Japanese War. In 1908 the French Minister of War writes in a dispatch that he estimates the Russian mobilization will be 7-8 days behind French mobilization, and expressed his concern with the Russian military reorganization. At a military conference in July 1908, the Russian military officials discussed the state of the Russian Army and the reorganization programs being undertaken. The French delegation noted the progress but noted six important things they thought needed to be done, which included the development of railways and railway equipment.²⁴⁶

In September of 1908 the Military Convention was directly invoked in discussions of Russian preparedness during a meeting between the French and Russian general staffs. The French argued that the state of Russian railway destination stations and communications was woefully behind. This signified to them that Russia was unable to uphold Article 2 of the military convention that outlines mobilization commitments. France believed it was urgent that Russia be able to mobilize faster. The Russian general staff assured the French that they are dedicated to improving their rail network with the financial resources at their disposal. The French staff assures them that these sacrifices will be offset by the acceleration of Russia's ability to prepare for war.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 10, No. 310.

²⁴⁵ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 10, No. 378.

²⁴⁶ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 11, No. 412.

²⁴⁷ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 11, No. 455.

There are a few notable differences in the French concern about Russian railways and the avenues from which the French expressed it compared to the Tashkent-Orenburg line. First, the railway issue is being addressed at much higher level. This round was being discussed at a meeting of general staffs between the two countries, meetings that were called for in the military convention that were not exercised as often before the Russo-Japanese War. The diplomatic cables indicate that the French Minister of War had become directly involved in the discussion whereas, during the Tashkent-Orenburg discussions it involved mostly the military attaché Ribot, and the French ambassadors in St. Petersburg. This trend would continue and the discussion would include increasingly higher members of government beyond generals and ambassadors. Second, during the Tashkent-Orenburg railway discussions the vaguer provisions of Franco-Russian treaties were only alluded to, such as, “ensuring the balance of power in Europe” and “maintaining the peace” in France's pursuit of her interests. During this discussion the specific stipulations and provisions, such as Article 2 of the military provision calling for specific mobilization commitments, are directly invoked to move the Russian Empire to construct more strategic railways. These trends would continue and the French would become more direct and forceful in their insistence that Russia increase her railway capabilities.

In February 1909, the French government reports that it had received a loan request from the Russian Empire for 4,525,000 rubles to improve her railways. Lt. Colonel Matton noted in this dispatch that Russia's military reorganization had thus far been insufficient.²⁴⁸ The French Ambassador in St. Petersburg wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 1910 that France should be concerned with the Gradno-Brest-Litovsk rail line, locomotives and rail cars for Russian mobilization in Poland.²⁴⁹ In December 1910 the French Minister of War, General

²⁴⁸ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 12, No. 88.

²⁴⁹ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 12, No. 455.

Brun, remarked to the French Foreign Minister that despite improvements of Russian mobilization in the West he still did not believe that Russian military reorganizations were adequately improving its mobilization abilities. Later that month the French ambassador reaffirmed these concerns and spoke of them again, in regards to Article 2 of the military convention.²⁵⁰ These concerns were brought to the fore at a conference in February 1911 involving the highest ranking officials of the French government with any interest in Russian relations. At the meeting was: the President of France; President of the Council, Briand; Pichon, Minister of Foreign Affairs; General Brun, Minister of War; Georges Louis, Ambassador to St. Petersburg; and Bapst, Director of Political Affairs. Article 2 of the military convention and concerns of Russia's inability to meet its mobilization obligations are a mainstay of the discussions.²⁵¹ By early 1911, concerns about the Russian railways had climbed to the highest levels of French Government.

In July 1912 a meeting between the two General Staffs of Russia and France was held. At this meeting a verbal agreement was made between the two that reaffirmed their commitment to the Military Convention and laid out commitments for the construction of Russian strategic railways. The report of the meeting stipulated several improvements to the Russian rail network that reflect the concerns of the French government previously mentioned. The stated improvements were as follows,

“These improvements could usefully be applied:

- a.* The doubling of the line: St. Petersburg-Riga-Taps-Valek-Mouravievo-Kochedary.
- b.* The Bryansk-Gomel sections; Louminetz Jabinka-line by Orel at Brest-Litovsk Warsaw.
- c.* A quadrupling of the section Jabinka-Brest-Litovsk which allow two currents one from Moscow, the other from Orel, to arrive at Brest-Litovsk.

²⁵⁰ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 13, No. 106.

²⁵¹ *DDF*, Ser. 2, Tom 13, No. 152.

d. A quadrupling of a section of the Siedlce-Warsaw line would link the latter city with the two routes coming from St. Petersburg and Bologïé.”²⁵²

These were by far, the most detailed and pervasive railway commitments that Russia had agreed to and were, no doubt, heavily influenced by French concerns.

In June of 1913 the French government authorized a loan of 400-500 million francs to Russia for the construction and upgrades of railways throughout the Russian Empire. The loan however, was accompanied by two conditions.²⁵³

“1.) That the strategic lines provided on the western border will be immediately begun;
2.) That the Russian army staff, in peacetime, be significantly increased.”²⁵⁴

In July 1913 Dumont, the French Minister of Finance, sent a dispatch to Pichon, French Minister of Foreign Affairs reemphasizing that this loan of 400-500 million francs would be used for strategic railways and the condition be added that construction begin by the end of the year.²⁵⁵

By August, Russian progress had not been satisfactory and the French government attached additional conditions to the railway loans,

“ 1.) Doubling the outside of the Revel-Petersburg-Riga-Kaunas-Mittau line.
2.) Doubling of the Moscow-Pinks-Warsaw-Brest-Litovsk line between Bryansk and Gomel.
3.) Quadrupling the same line between Zabinka and Brest-Litovsk.
4.) Quadrupling of the Bologoya-Siedlce line to Warsaw, and between Warsaw and Siedlce.
5.) Transformation the Russian route line Alexandrowo Poland-Warsaw-Krakow, for preparation to be double track.”²⁵⁶

²⁵²DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 3, No. 200. 262.

“Ces améliorations pourraient utilement s'appliquer, semble-t-il :

- a. Au doublement de la ligne : Saint-Pétersbourg-Taps-Walek-Riga-Mouravievo-Kochedary.
- b. Aux tronçons Briansk-Gomel ; Louminetz-Jabinka de la ligne d'Orel à Varsovie par Brest-Litovsk.
- c. Au quadruplement du tronçon Jabinka-Brest-Litovsk qui permettrait aux deux courants venant l'un de Moscou, l'autre d'Orel, d'aboutir à Brest-Litovsk.
- d. Au quadruplement du tronçon Siedlce-Varsovie qui amènerait jusqu'à cette dernière ville les deux courants venant de Saint-Pétersbourg d'une part et de Bologïé de l'autre.”

²⁵³DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 7, No. 134.

²⁵⁴DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 7, No. 143.

¹⁹ Que les lignes stratégiques prévues sur la frontière Ouest seront immédiatement commencées ; ²⁹ Que les effectifs de l'armée russe en temps de paix seront notablement augmentés.

²⁵⁵DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 7, No. 291.

By the end of August an additional loan for 80 million roubles was requested by the Russian Minister of Finance Kovotzoff to assist in the construction of strategic railways. This loan was consolidated with the 500 million franc loan agreed upon in 1912.²⁵⁷

In October of 1913, Delcassé wrote the French Foreign Minister that the French might object to the construction of economically significant lines if they delayed in any way the construction of strategic lines in Russia.²⁵⁸ In November of 1913 the French Minister of War made even more detailed proposals for improvements to the Russian rail network.

- “1.) Construction of new lines
 - a. Construction of the double-track line: Ryazan-Tula-Soukitritchi-Bobruisk-Baranovichi to Warsaw.
 - b. Construction of the double-track line: Grischino-Krementschug-Fastow-Zhitomir-Kowel-Ivangorod.
- 2.) Doubling of single-track lines
 - a. Doubling of the lines: Sysran-Pensa-Rjajsk-Bogoiavlensk and Soukinitchi-Smolensk
 - b. Doubling of the line: Poltava-Kiev-Lozowaja-Sarny-Kowel.
 - c. Doubling the line Vilna-Baranovichi-Luninez-Sarny-Rowno.
 - d. Doubling of the line: Baranovichi-Bjelostock.
- 3.) Increased capacity of the rail crossing of the Vistula to Warsaw, so as to have two independent outlets, on the left bank of the river, two double track lines arriving in Warsaw.
- 4.) Updates to the Russian gauge lines on the left bank of the Vistula-Tchentockov Warsaw, Warsaw-Alexandrovo.
- 5.) Increase of rolling stock, especially high-powered locomotives.
- 6.) Improved performance of existing lines.
 - a. Increasing the speed of military trains.
 - b. By increasing the number of trains started every day in case of mobilization to the different lines not yet equipped with the Blocksystem.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 7, No. 521. 563.

²⁵⁷DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 8, No. 104.

²⁵⁸DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 8, No. 392.

²⁵⁹DDF, Ser. 3, Tom 8, No. 453. 571.

- 1.) Construction de lignes nouvelles
 - a. Construction de la ligne à double voie : Riazan-Toula-Soukitritchi-Bobruisk-Baranovitchi vers Varsovie.
 - b. Construction de la ligne à double voie : Grischino-Krementschug-Fastow-Jitomir-Kowel-Ivangorod.
- 2.) Doublement de lignes à voie unique
 - a. Doublement de la lignes : Sysran-Pensa-Rjajsk-Bogoiavlensk-Soukinitchi-Smolensk
 - b. Doublement de la ligne : Lozowaja-Poltawa-Kiew-Sarny-Kowel.

This would be the final set of detailed requests from the French government. All of these conditions were attached to the French loans to Russia.

The negotiations of strategic Russian railway projects as conditions of loans continued through 1914. Unfortunately for both powers, several of the loan negotiations were not completed by the outbreak of the First World War. More importantly, many of these proposed railways were not completed or even started, by the outbreak of the war. The imperial intersections and relationship between France and Russia were, at the outbreak of World War I, using the Russian railways as a focal point. France was desperately concerned by Russia's ability to mobilize for war against Germany and used her financial leverage on the Russian Empire to get it. France was compelled to use the means at her disposal, financial leverage and treaties to ensure her security. The state of Russian finances combined with the sheer domestic importance of the railways compelled the Russian Empire to make serious concessions to France in their construction.

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- c. Doublement de la ligne : Wilna-Baranovitchi-Luninez-Sarny-Rowno.
 - d. Doublement de la ligne : Baranovitchi-Bjelostock.
 - 3.) Augmentation des moyens de passage par voie ferrée de la Vistule, vers Varsovie, de façon à posséder deux débouchés indépendants, sur la rive gauche de fleuve, des deux lignes à double voie qui arrivent à Varsovie.
 - 4.) Mise à l'écartement russe des lignes de la rive gauche de la Vistule : Varsovie-Tchentockow, Varsovie-Alexandrowo.
 - 5.) Augmentation du matériel roulant, en particulier des locomotives à grande puissance.
 - 6.) Amélioration au rendement des lignes existantes.
 - a. En augmentation la vitesse des trains militaires.
 - b. En augmentant le nombre des trains mis en marche chaque jour en cas de mobilisation, sur les différentes lignes non encore munies du blocksystem.

Conclusions and Afterthoughts

This study was an attempt, first and foremost, to more deeply explore the complexities of imperial intersections as laid out by Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper in Empires in World History by applying them to the Russian Empire and Russian railways in the nineteenth century. Understanding imperial intersections in specific case studies required the exploration of understandings of empire, its processes, its configurations and, most importantly, applying them to the specific characteristics of individual empires, in this case the Russian Empire. Imperial intersections encompass a specific relationship between empires that previous concepts of empire do not. The imperial intersection between the Russian Empire and the French Third Republic involving the construction of Russian railroads demonstrates the usefulness in studying complexities of relationships between empires, and the difference with relations between other forms of states.

Manipulation and influence exerted by empires through the construction and financing of railroads is often attributed to expansionist imperialism. In the case of the Chinese Eastern Railway the much stronger and more domineering Russian Empire used the railways to one-sidedly impose its foreign policy goals on the relatively much weaker Chinese Empire, aptly described as railway imperialism. The terms were dictated solely by Russia, and accepted by a relatively helpless China. This fits the definition of imperialism and indirect empire satisfactorily but, it also constitutes an imperial intersection. Other studies of railroads have addressed imperialism and the imposition of indirect empire through the construction of railways

in history but, have not treated them in terms of imperial intersections between more equal powers and empires.

Imperialism and indirect empire are inadequate to treat the French influence on the construction of Russian railways. The relationship between France and Russia fit the definitions of imperialism or indirect empire because the two were on relatively equal footing and neither solely dictated terms on a static, helpless lesser power. France may have been in a stronger financial position but, France was also dependent on the Russian Empire for its military planning, military security and, its international position. Imperial intersection is the only concept that can describe their relationship and its complexities. The complexities and specific characteristics of empire in Russia illustrate the significance of its imperial intersection with France. In the Russian Empire the power was highly consolidated at the very center of administration in the hands of the tsars and was a defining characteristic of its empire. Unchallenged governmental control in significant domestic issues was paramount and even a source of legitimacy. Legitimacy of empire in Russia hinged on the presence of an all powerful tsar. The tsars worked diligently to consolidate power in their hands. Any loss of this power was a detriment to the Russian style of rule in its empire. The Russian railways were so integral to incredibly important domestic issues of state that any outside control or influence upon them represented a significant diffusion of centralized tsarist power. French influence on railroad construction was such an occurrence. Russia's immense size that spanned continents and engulfed a plethora of peoples made transportation infrastructure an urgent concern. The needs and challenges of transportation infrastructure to the Russian Empire were much greater when compared to her more geographically compact European rivals. The paramount importance of transportation to the far flung empire also could not help but, make it a significant factor to the

perceived power of the tsars, both domestically and internationally. International standing and relationships between empires were also critical to them. By the mid-nineteenth century, Russia's standing as a Great Power had been dealt a decisive blow by her defeat in the Crimean War. The Crimean War inspired the Russian Empire to embark upon an industrialization drive to which railroad construction would play no small part.

The overland transportation needs of the Russian Empire had always been substantial. For centuries the Russian Empire relied upon canals, rivers and roads for its transportation needs. The tsars built roads and canals in the empire, they were crucial for maintaining administrative connections with the empire and the tsars made sure to keep the reins of transportation in their hands. The canals were primarily responsible for the movement of goods in the empire and the roads were primarily used by the army and the government. The canals and roads never truly met the transportation needs of the Russian Empire. This made the advent of railways and locomotives all that more important.

Primitive incarnations of railways of little significance existed in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, but the first true railway complete with iron rails and locomotives was the Tsarskoye-Selo line. It was opened in 1837 and connected St. Petersburg to the tsar's summer residence. The 1830s saw a debate over building railways in Russia that pitted those in favor of railways against many who had vested interests in improving and expanding the canal system. Eventually, the canals lost to the railways. Tsar Nicholas I, the first railway tsar, maintained centralized and governmental control over the railways, even bringing some into being through decree. The degree to which the Russian government exerted itself on railway construction and planning oscillated after Nicholas I's death in 1855 through the end of the 1870s. Experiments in private railway enterprise were permitted but, the government

consistently kept at least one hand on the reigns. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 illustrated the inadequacies of the overburdened Russian railways. The transport of soldiers and critical supplies was significantly delayed. After the war the Russian government under Alexander III aggressively bought and acquired Russian railways. The Russian government's tight grip on the railways continued until the First World War.

The end of the Crimean War in 1856 inspired an industrialization drive in the Russian Empire in order to maintain its position among the great powers. This industrialization ushered in a boom of railway construction, taking off in 1866 and continuing until 1914. Industrialization and railway construction reached its most rapid growth at the close of the 1880s through the 1890s until the depression of 1900. Witte, Minister of Finance of the Russian Empire from 1892 to 1903, who had previously served as the Minister of Ways and Communications, initiated industrialization drive fueled by railway construction. Count Witte's most ambitious undertaking was the Trans-Siberian railway which connected the Russian core with its possessions in the Far East. The Trans-Siberian railway was of central importance to the Tsar Alexander III and the upper echelons of Russian government. In 1891 Alexander III even sent his heir, Nicholas II, to lay the first brick at eastern most point at Vladivostok. From 1887 to 1901 Russia's railway network grew by 26,355 versts, almost doubling the length of the entire network.

Witte's system of industrialization was underpinned by construction of the railroads. The railroads created demands for Russian resources, manufacturing, metallurgy, and other major industries. Count Witte and the Russian government aggressively pursued policies that forced railway enterprises to purchase materials strictly from Russian sources. The railways in turn connected for the first time, far flung industrial resources and manufacturing centers that further

snowballed industrial development in Russia. These connections also allowed the development of new industrial centers in the Russian Empire, mostly in the borderlands in Riga, Ukraine, Baku, but also in Saint Petersburg. Older centers of industry and mining in the Russian heartland were marginalized. By the end of the nineteenth century the Russian railways had become the backbone of the empire's industrial economy. The railways were of the deepest domestic importance and were no less than an umbilical cord for the entire Russian economy as well as the effectiveness of the Russian military. The Russian railways are of particular interest when talking about imperial intersections because they became intertwined with some of the most important parts of the empire. Influence upon them had implications for the entire economy and military abilities of the empire. Witte's system of industrialization had one critical component that would allow such foreign influence from France.

Witte's system of rapid industrialization relied on massive amounts of deficit spending. The state of Russia's finances was quite dire throughout the industrialization process and the Russian Empire relied on vast amounts of foreign borrowing to fund its endeavors. Until 1887 Germany had been Russia's primary creditor but, Otto von Bismarck barred Russian access to German markets over Russia's failure to renew the Three Emperor's League. The following year France floated a large loan to the Russian Empire, shifting the configuration of financial relationships in the Russian Empire. France would by far become the primary source of foreign loans to the Russian Empire at around the same time Witte's system for industrializing Russia through railway construction was started. In the last decade of the nineteenth century French holdings of Russian government debt never dropped below 26% and in the first decades of the twentieth century they frequently hovered at around 30%.

The international situation of the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire expanded their blossoming financial relationship into a formal diplomatic relationship that would entangle French foreign policy goals and security concerns with the Russian railway system and their effectiveness. The French Third Republic had been diplomatically isolated since its defeat by Germany in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and had been in need of an ally among the other European Great Powers. The unification of Germany after the war and the resulting rebalancing of power in Europe made this need even more urgent. The Russian Empire had enjoyed a comfortable place in the German chancellor's, Otto von Bismarck, European order. Russia was a member of the Three Emperor's League which oriented her with the newly formed German Reich and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This alliance was allowed to lapse by Russia due to tensions with Germany and a rivalry with Austria in the Balkans and the future pieces of the Ottoman Empire whose condition at the time appeared terminal.

France was well aware of the possibility for a new ally when she made her first loan to the Russian Empire after Germany had cut off its access to markets in Berlin. In 1889 Russia and France signed an agreement that if either were attacked by a member of the newly formed Triple Alliance consisting of Germany, Austria, and Italy, the other would to its aid. The wording of the agreement obliged both powers to come to the aid of the others with rapid and simultaneous mobilization of its forces. The agreement was expanded into a military convention that was signed in 1893 that, in more detail, outlined the obligations of the signatories in the face of hostility from the Triple Alliance. It included detailed mobilization timetables and troop figures. The Russian Empire was very hesitant and reluctant to agree to the provisions in the 1893 military convention and was persuaded by the financial leverage France held over the Russian Empire. The military convention was directed towards the Triple Alliance, specifically

Germany and required the powers to simultaneously and rapidly mobilize specific number of troops and direct them against Germany.

The Franco-Russian Alliance would be upgraded in 1899 with additions proposed by the French Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé. This expansion of the treaty was inspired by the foreign policy disaster at Fashoda. In Fashoda, Egypt the colonial expansion of France and Britain, long on an intercept course, finally collided and ended in humiliation for France in 1899. France had expected the Russian Empire to, in some way, come to her aid against England. The Russian Empire instead loudly trumped its indifference to the affair across Europe leaving France feeling abandoned by her ally. The 1899 addendum to the military convention would expand the scope of the treaty beyond the purely defensive and directed against Germany and the Triple Alliance. It would expand it to include preemptive action for maintaining the balance of power in Europe, and its lifespan was no longer limited to the existence of the Triple Alliance. The alliance was expanded so that it could be brought bear against England, in light of the Fashoda Crisis and Russian indifference.

The Russian government assuaged French fears of abandonment by explaining that its inaction during the Fashoda Crisis was due to its inability to significantly threaten England anywhere. This admission led the French government to the conclusion that if the Russian Empire constructed a line from Tashkent to Orenburg it could substantially threaten British India. The Russian government had not planned to construct this line. Finance Minister Witte objected vehemently on the grounds this line served no economic purpose but, his objections were finally over ruled by the Emperor and the line was completed in 1906.

France exerted itself not insignificantly in persuading the Russian Government to agree on the Tashkent-Orenburg railway as opposed to more economically viable routes that would

have increased the mobilization time of the Russian army against India. The French made reference to the expanded military convention which could now be triggered in the event of English hostility and the provisions and timetables for mobilization. The French even went so far as to coach the Russian Minister War who was in favor of the Tashkent-Orenburg line in the effective presentation of his arguments to the Emperor. The French Government however, relied most heavily on its role as a creditor to the Russian Empire to lobby for the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg line. The French incentivized its construction with the issuance of a loan that was contingent on the construction of the Tashkent-Orenburg railway. It is difficult to say conclusively to what extent French influence persuaded the Tsar. But most likely it was significant.

The second wave of French influence on Russian railway construction would be much more powerful. In 1905 the Russian Empire became involved in a catastrophic war with Japan. The debacle also sparked large scale domestic upheaval. In 1906 the Russian Empire was limping. Count Witte, who had served as Chairman of Ministers was now the Prime Minister of the newly established Duma, negotiated a massive loan from France. This would be the largest foreign loan of all time and one Witte felt, given the state of Russian finances after the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 Revolution, was vital to the survival of the regime. This further tilted the financial relationship in favor of the French and made their influence much more potent.

This relationship was not one-sided. The Russian Empire may have depended on French loans but France, also depended on the Russian railways. French security and her war plans increasingly hinged upon the speed at which the Russian army could mobilize. The disaster of 1905-1906 illustrated to France the inadequacies of Russian infrastructure and severely agitated

anxieties concerning her ability to adequately assist France in case of war. Tensions with England had radically subsided by 1906 and once again French war plans refocused on a war against Germany and the Triple Alliance. French war plans assumed that Germany would thrust the majority of its military might first against France, hoping to crush her before Russia could mobilize. It was important for the survival of France in this situation for Russia to mobilize as rapidly as possible. The Russo-Japanese War created serious doubts about Russia's ability to mobilize in accordance with the provisions of the military convention.

These concerns would inspire France to attach very elaborate conditions to future loans. France's stipulations included detailed and extensive plans for the construction, and expansion of several rail lines though out the Russian railway network to accelerate Russian mobilization to the German border. French diplomats were far more direct in pointing to the mobilization provisions of the military convention, and in presenting their estimations that indicated the Russian Empire could not meet its mobilization obligations on schedule. France would continue to submit recommendations for the construction and upgrades to specific rail lines to accelerate Russian mobilization as conditions of French loans. The French railway recommendations did not take economic benefits into consideration, and were solely focused on the military and strategic value of the lines. The Russian Empire agreed to most of the provisions but, the negotiation process continued from 1906 all the way until 1914. Many of the upgrades and new lines would not be completed before the outbreak of the First World War.

The imperial intersections between the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire were complex and deep rooted. The Russian railways became a link that was deeply rooted in the development of the entire industrial economy of the Russian Empire in the 1890s and, was of significant importance to the Russian center of power. Witte's deficit spending and reliance on

international loans for railroad construction introduced an international element that was essential to its construction. The evolution of international politics among the European Great Powers in the nineteenth drew the Russian Empire and France together. They formed a financial relationship that was followed up and solidified by a formal alliance. French became a prime source of foreign loans critical for the construction of the Russian railways which had become integral to the development of the entire industrial economy of Russia. France's international standing, and war plans all hinged on the speed of Russian mobilization which in turn was entirely dependent on the Russian railway network. The Russian railways became the locus point of profound imperial intersections between the Russian Empire and the French Third Republic in the decades preceding the outbreak of the First World War. The Franco-Russian relationship to the Russian railways were crucial did not remain stagnant. The relationship crystallized but then began to precipitously reinforce and intensify itself. The imperial intersection between France the Russian Empire and its railways perpetually reinforced each other and grew stronger over time.

The imperial intersections treated in this thesis are an example of the complexity, and profundity they could have for empires. It is a skeleton and overview of the big picture connections between France and Russia and the imperial intersections to which the Russian railways served as a locus point. There is opportunity for expanded study both for this particular topic and by using the skeleton outlined in this study, smaller scale case studies of the people groups in the peripheral regions of the empire and how their imperial configurations were affected by the coming of the railroads such as the Baltic German elite. Finally, it is interesting that the imperial intersections between Russia and France involving the Russian railways do not seem so alien and out of place in today's world. Similar relationships seem like they would be

right at home in the contemporary globalized world of the twenty-first century. Many scholars of empire note that the age of empire has passed or is at least in a temporary lapse. Maybe imperial intersections survived the mass extinction of empires and are ancestors of contemporary globalization. Perhaps imperial intersections are a legacy of empire that persists today.

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