

# Russian Sovereign, Islamic Dynast

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## Motivation

- This project is at once *comparative* and *transregional*:
  - As indirectly ruled territories of the British and Russian empires respectively, Hyderabad and Bukhara were structurally similar political entities
  - They were also enmeshed in a culture of Islamic documentation, stretching from the Balkans to India.
- Who were the winners and losers of indirect colonialism, and how was it different from “pure” colonialism?

## Project Description

- Deciphering and comparing two of the very few surviving Persian-language bureaucratic archives.
- Field work in Uzbekistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and India.
- Using *digital humanities* analyze texts in aggregate and conceptually map the region.

## Context

- Few pre-20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic bureaucratic documents survive anywhere in the world.
- Layered sovereignty is alive and well in today's world:
  - Puerto Rico, Taiwan, northern Syria
- The state-building processes at the heart of this study shaped modern countries in Central and South Asia.



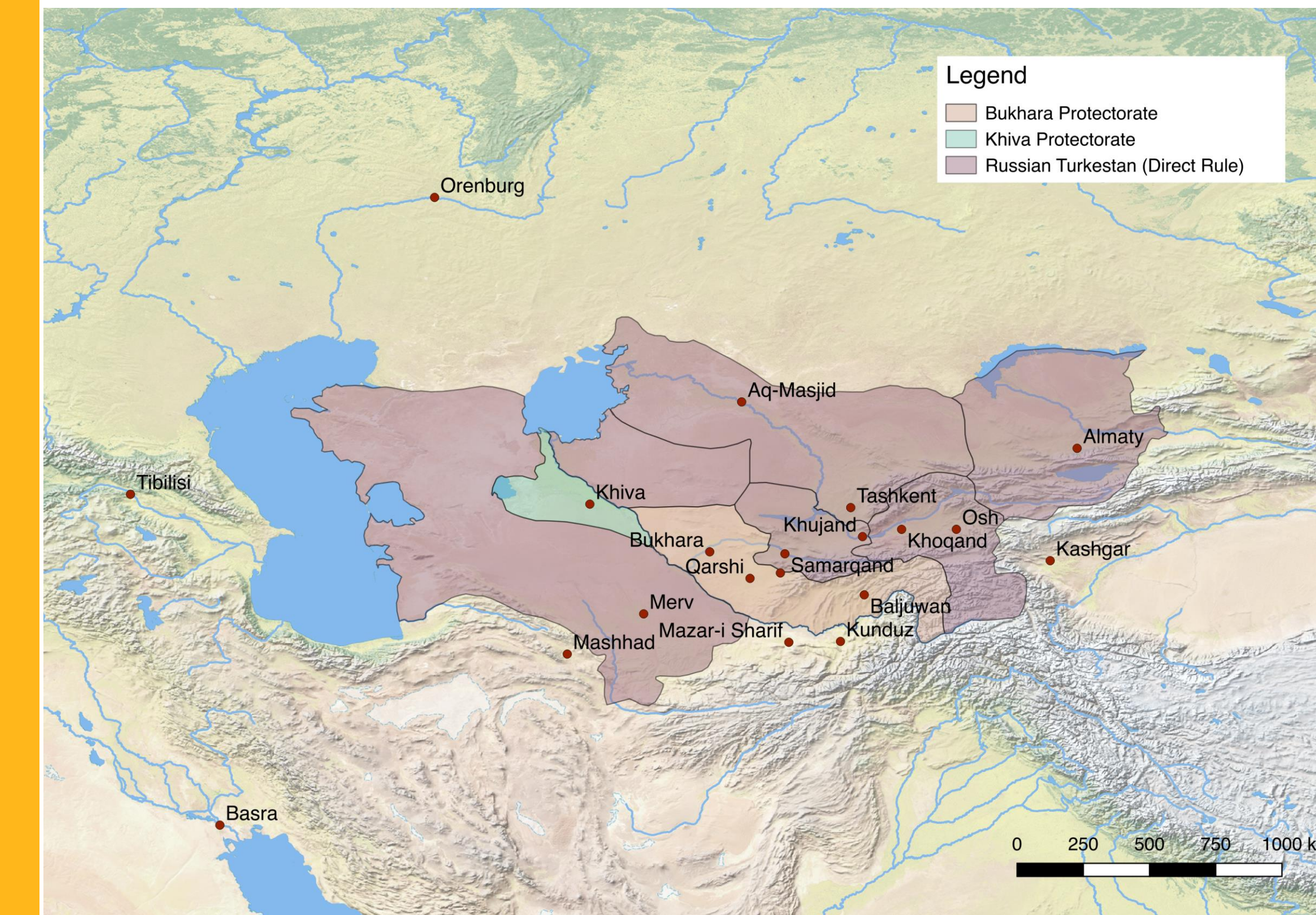
The Chahar Minar (“four minarets”) is an architectural form found only in Bukhara and Hyderabad. It serves as an apt metaphor for the deep connections historical connections between the two protectorates.



# What does indirect rule in colonial empires reveal about sovereignty, Islamic authority, and the rise of the modern state?



## Map of Colonial Central Asia



## Project Deliverables

- First article and eventual book chapter: 1892 cholera outbreak
  - The cholera outbreak was reflected both in Russian and Bukharan documents.
  - Russian-mandated quarantine measures consolidated colonial power in the protectorate.
- Five-months of archival research in Uzbekistan, leading to “write-up” fellowship
- Long-term product: monograph comparing Bukhara and Hyderabad

## Potential Impact

- Better understand the nature of *indirect* colonial rule.
- Delimitate where did Persian bureaucratic practices began and colonial ones ended.
- Assess what made new institutional practices “modern” in the eyes of locals.

## References

- Early research findings:
  - James Pickett, “Written into Submission: Reassessing Sovereignty through a Forgotten Eurasian Dynasty,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (June 0, 2018): 817–45.
  - James Pickett and Paolo Sartori, “From the Archetypical Archive to Cultures of Documentation,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62, no. 5–6 (0, 2019): 773–98.
- For more information, visit [jamespickett.info](http://jamespickett.info)

## Acknowledgements

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