

Before it can be clearly understood what factors lie in the balance to incline the future policy of Russia towards peace or war, it is necessary to consider that policy which, in the past, has already brought her into conflict with Japan in the eastern confines of Asia, and which, if persisted in, will surely bring her into conflict with Britain in the far south of that continent. The need of the Russian Empire for access to the ice-free oceans of the world is primarily the determining factor of Russian Imperial policy. Apart from the strategic importance and the power attaching to ice-free harbours, they are vitally necessary for the economic development and the future prosperity and wealth of all Russia. For the port of commerce is a mouth through which a nation nourishes itself. But whereas the strong nations of Europe stand between Russia and the nearer western seas, only the weak peoples of Asia are scattered between her and the far more distant oceans of the east and south. Consequently the tide of Slav expansion has set naturally towards the sea—in the line of least resistance—across Asia. And it is the pressure of this Russian advance southward against the line of the fortieth degree of latitude—across Asia—which to-day menaces the world's tranquillity; while the flanks of this latitudinal line of advance threaten both Britain and Japan, and has drawn these far distant peoples together in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of Defence.

This curious fact regarding latitude 40 becomes clear if its line is followed across Asia. In the past—both in Europe and Asia—latitude 40 was the world's great line of power. At the present day, latitude 40 is the world's great danger line. To the west it cuts Portugal and Spain, Morocco lying to the south of it. It passes through the homeland of the Roman Empire, and cuts the modern frontiers of Greece and Turkey. Emerging from these spheres of historical glory, it enters the spheres of a remoter greatness, which are now the great danger zones of modern world-polity. It cuts the Dardanelles, leaving Constantinople to the north of it, and passes across Asia Minor to touch the frontiers of Russia and Persia, south of