

1 Imperial space

The concept of space has become a much disputed topic in the world of scholarship. At one extreme, the “spatial turn” has replaced the physical grounding of geography with symbolic meaning. One result has been a cartography in which space surrenders its independent existence to mental mapping. Terms such as frontiers, borders, boundaries, and place are widely employed to delineate virtually all aspects of culture. Another less radical result has been to repair the long-frayed bonds between geography and history by reintroducing the cultural factor. This is the approach used in this chapter to designate Eurasia, borderlands, and frontiers, the key components of imperial space.

My treatment differs from two widely accepted theoretical approaches: the geopolitical and the civilizational. Both stress a single factor underpinning international politics, whether physical geography or ideology. In practice they come close to endorsing determinism. Both also divide space by static linear borders. By contrast, the present study will interpret Eurasia, its frontiers, and borderlands as spaces shaped by complex historical processes forming a geocultural context in which the great conflicts of the twentieth century will be situated. My preference for the geocultural over the geopolitical and civilizational is also based in part on the fact that the discourses of geopolitics and civilization as applied to Eurasia have been ideologically complicit in the coming of the Cold War.

Three approaches

The term geopolitics has intellectual roots in the work of German geographers in the nineteenth century.¹ Subsequently, an Anglo-American school of publicists and scholars shaped these ideas into a new theory of international relations that focused on the perceived Russian bid for control over the Eurasian land mass that would provide the natural

¹ Rudolph Kjellen, *Grundriss zu einem System der Politik* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1920), p. 40.

resources and strategic advantage necessary to achieve global hegemony. In a much revised, but recognizable, form, their views gained widespread acceptance in the early years of the twentieth century and again in the post-Second World War debates over Soviet foreign policy, particularly in the work of influential scholars, highly placed advisors, and politicians like Nicholas Spykman, Isaiah Bowman, George Kennan, and J. William Fulbright. These ideas became the common coin of the containment policy.²

At the same time, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, another group of American publicists was building on the influential frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner in order to promote an American overseas empire. Their advocacy merged geopolitics, Social Darwinism, Manifest Destiny, and the Open Door Policy.³ This cluster of ideas also displayed a strong anti-Russian bias, and acquired a prominent place in the debates during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and in the interwar period.⁴ The perceived geopolitical threat of Russian domination of Eurasia became entangled with the ideology of an American mission, laying the foundations for American foreign policy during the early years of the Cold War. It continues to inform the historiography of Russia and Eurasia.

The civilizational approach to Eurasia also has its roots in the works of nineteenth-century theorists. One line, represented by Russian pan-Slav philosophers and publicists such as Nikolai Danilevsky and Fedor Dostoevsky, extolled the uniqueness and messianic destiny of a Russian civilization that spanned both Europe and Asia, producing something different from both. Although pan-Slavism never became an official ideology, its precepts strongly influenced a generation of Russian military

² Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944); Michael P. Gerace, "Between MacKinder and Spykman. Geopolitics, Containment and After," *Comparative Strategy* 10(4) (1991): 347–64; Randall Bennett Woods, *Fulbright. A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 141. The work of Spykman and MacKinder still occupied an important place in the education of American military officers in the latter years of the Cold War. See Department of Geography, *Readings in Military Geography* (West Point: United States Military Academy, 1981). For the geopolitical approach, see, for example, Dominic Lieven, *Empire. The Russian Empire and its Rivals from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (London: Pimlico, 2003), esp. ch. 6; John LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700–1917. The Geopolitics of Expansionism and Containment* (Oxford University Press, 1997); and Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (London: Routledge, 1992).

³ Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire. An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), on Turner, pp. 62–72, 95–101. For Turner's influence on Woodrow Wilson, see William A. Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *Pacific Historical Review* (November 1955): 379–95.

⁴ Cf. Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire. The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

proconsuls and geographers in the course of Russia's expansion to the east. The pan-Slav bugbear was taken even more seriously by statesmen and publicists in the West, reinforcing the geopolitical version of the Russian threat in the decades before the Russian Revolution.

After the fall of tsarism, two avatars of the civilizational idea appeared in Russia, apparently diametrically opposed to one another. A small group of émigré Russian intellectuals, dubbing themselves Eurasianists, interpreted the historical role of Russia as a civilization-blending element of the European and Asian cultures destined to bring spiritual unity of the world. Largely ignored in their time and repressed in the Soviet Union, a new Eurasianism has re-surfaced in the post-Soviet period as a powerful voice in the reconstruction of a new national myth within the Russian Federation.⁵

A second offshoot of the civilizational thesis was Stalin's doctrine of socialism in one country, a radical reinterpretation of Marxism–Leninism. The centerpiece of this theory was his proclamation that the success of the world revolution depended upon the building of socialism in backward Russia rather than vice versa. To the extent that this was an unacknowledged version of Eurasianism, it caused a minor scandal in the interparty struggles in the Soviet Union in the 1920s.⁶ Western observers were quick to demonstrate what they regarded as an organic link between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary ideas of Russia's unique universal destiny as proof of its innate messianism. This myth of unlimited Russian expansionism also became part of the Cold War lore.⁷

Though the term geocultural has not enjoyed the same vogue as geopolitical, it has its own intellectual pedigree in the pioneering work of the

⁵ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "The Emergence of Eurasianism," *California Slavic Studies* 4 (1967): 39–72; Ilya Vinkovetsky and Charles Schlacks, Jr. (eds.), *Exodus to the East. Forebodings and Events. An Affirmation of the Eurasians* (Idyllwild, CA: Charles Schlacks, 1996); and Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Classical Eurasianism and its Legacy," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 34(2) (Summer 2000): 125–40. The revival began even earlier with the work of Lev Gumilov, *Iz istorii Evrazii* (Moscow: Issskustvo, 1993) and *Drevnaia Rus' i velikaia step'* (Moscow: DI-DIK, 1997). See also Aleksandr Dugin, *Misterii Evrazii* (Moscow: Arktogeia, 1996) and the journal *Vestnik Evrazii*.

⁶ S. V. Tsakunov, "NEP: evoliutsiia rezhima i rozhdenie natsional-bolshevizma," in Iu. N. Afanas'ev (ed.), *Sovetskoe obshchestvo. Vozniknoveniie, razvitiie, istoricheskii final*, 3 vols. (Moscow: RGGU, 1997), vol. I, pp. 100–12.

⁷ See, for example, Thomas Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia*, 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1919); Hans Kohn, *Pan Slavism. Its History and Ideology* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1953); Carl J. Friederich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956); James Billington, *The Icon and the Ax* (New York: Knopf, 1966).

precursors and early theorists of the Annales School.⁸ The basic assumption underlying the geocultural outlook is that climate and soil, the contours of the land, abundance or lack of navigable rivers, proximity to seas, all present possibilities as well as imposing constraints on human action. But they do not determine historical development, the distribution and concentration of power, or specific policy choices. Geocultural factors may shape what Lucian Febvre has called “privileged places for the birth of viable political entities, regions that favor the growth of states.”⁹ However, even privileged places are not bound by natural frontiers, but emerge from the interaction of cultures, the evolution of collective communities, and the rationalizing action of rulers and ruling elites. For centuries societies and polities have sought to fix their outer limits in the search to satisfy basic needs for group identity, stability, and security.¹⁰ Yet, by its very nature, the process of locating “the other” on the far side of a real or imaginary demarcation line has constituted a potential threat. Thus, boundary maintenance became an ambiguous process.¹¹ In light of these insights the Eurasian frontiers and borderlands will be treated in this study as fluid rather than fixed and immutable concepts, subject to change over time, not wholly imagined, yet endowed with ideological meaning by intellectuals and politicians to serve statist aims, whether imperial or national.¹² By treating Eurasia as a contested geocultural space, Russian expansion is placed in a different context, as a product of a centuries-old struggle among rival imperial powers.

From the geocultural perspective, four interrelated but distinct processes shaped Eurasian space. First, over long periods of time, from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries, large-scale population movements – migration, deportation, flight, and colonization – scattered a great variety of culture groups drawn from Germanic, Slavic, Turkic, Mongol, and Chinese ethnolinguistic groups, and Christian (Roman Catholic,

⁸ Paul Vidal de la Blache, *Tableau de la géographie de la France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1903, reprinted 1979 and 1994) and André-Louis Sanguin, *Vidal de la Blache. Une génie de la géographie* (Paris: Belin, 1993), pp. 327–33. For a similar analysis by a sociologist, see Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

⁹ Lucian Febvre, *La terre et l'évolution humaine* (Paris: A. Michel, [1922] 1949), p. 339. See also the work of Carl O. Sauer summarized in his presidential address to the American Association of Geographers in December 1940, “Foreword to Historical Geography,” available at: www.colorado.edu/geography/giw/sauer-co/1941_fhg/1941_fhg.html.

¹⁰ Michel Foucher, *Fronts et frontières. Un tour du monde géopolitique*, new edn (Paris: Fayard, 1991), pp. 77–79.

¹¹ Cf. Frederik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Differences* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1969), who stresses the importance of boundaries in maintaining the stability and continuity of ethnic units.

¹² Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (New York: Verso, 1991).

Orthodox, and Protestant), Judaic, Muslim, and Buddhist believers over vast distances. The result was, in metaphoric terms, a demographic kaleidoscopic of unparalleled variety and complexity rather than a mosaic. In the course of these movements, certain areas acquired the characteristics of what anthropologists have called shatter zones where numerous ethno-religious groups intermingled with one another in close proximity, creating conditions of potential conflict.¹³ Second, beginning in the sixteenth century, a number of major centers of political power (Sweden, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Muscovy, the Habsburg, Ottoman, Safavid, and, later in the seventeenth century, the Qing empires), seeking to enhance their security, stability, and resource base, expanded on the margins of their core lands into territories separating them from one another, here to be called complex frontiers, with shifting, contested, and often blurred boundaries, reflecting the changing outcomes of the military, demographic, and cultural competition. Third, the attempt to conquer these disputed territories and incorporate them as borderlands within the body politic of the increasingly multicultural state systems became an external struggle that profoundly affected the process of state-building in Eurasia. Fourth, within the borderlands an internal struggle developed as the subjugated peoples continuously sought ways to defend against linguistic assimilation and religious conversion, and to preserve local autonomy or regain their independence. They adopted a variety of strategies ranging along a broad spectrum from violent revolution to cooperation. The centers of power reacted with an equally varied set of strategies ranging from compromise and toleration to repression. Both the external and internal struggles over the borderlands were frequently entangled as the rival states encouraged subversion among their enemies and the conquered populations sought support from the outside, thus blurring the conventional distinction between foreign and domestic policies within imperial space.

These four processes unfolded unevenly over time, and involved different combinations of multicultural states, marked by a rough chronological division into three periods. From the earliest recorded history to approximately the sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, a cyclical pattern

¹³ By virtue of their ethnic, religious, and linguistic complexity the shatter zones of the Eurasian borderlands have no counterpart in Western Europe, where frontier zones are almost invariably characterized by the encounter of only two ethnolinguistic groups, as in Alsace, Schleswig, Savoie, Istria, Flanders, or the Scottish Highlands. For a similar view, see Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires. Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), which appeared too late for me to take advantage of its rich content.

defined the relations between nomadic and sedentary societies. In the second period, the emerging, relatively centralized multicultural states began to expand into the frontier areas and incorporate conquered peoples into borderlands. In the third period, beginning in the late eighteenth century, the Russian Empire gained ascendancy over its main imperial rivals in the struggle to acquire and to consolidate new borderlands. The fourth and shortest period, lasting a few decades before the First World War, was marked by a series of imperial crises culminating in the collapse of the major multicultural dynastic states, the Russian, Habsburg, Ottoman, Qajar, and Qing empires.

Geocultural diversity in Eurasia

From the earliest period Eurasian space was shaped by the encounter between diverse types of pastoral nomadic societies practicing a great variety of economic strategies, and sedentary societies engaged in an equally broad range of agricultural systems and small manufacturing. Nomadic groups ranged from the tundra and taiga of the northern latitudes, south through the mixed forests and treeless grasslands to the semi-arid steppe, deserts, and eastern highlands, extending in broad, irregularly shaped bands from the Danube delta to the coasts of the Sea of Japan. The appearance of pastoral nomads may have been the result of a long process of interaction between the forest, oases, and fringe of the steppe with cultivated lands.¹⁴ Owen Lattimore described the “flanks of the main body of steppe society” as “an almost infinite series of combinations of steppe-nomadic, hunting, agricultural and town life.”¹⁵ Similarly, historians of the Ottoman Empire have pointed out the fallacy of dividing nomads and settled peasants into rigidly separate categories. Their interaction depended much on the physical geography, fertility of the soil, climatic factors, and crop yields.¹⁶

In the early period, the physical environment of Eurasia was more favorable to a nomadic than to a sedentary way of life. The continental climate, with long winters and dry hot summers, the inadequate supplies

¹⁴ Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, 2nd edn (New York: Capitol Publications, 1951), esp. pp. 113–14, 158–63, 450–54.

¹⁵ Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History. Collected Papers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 248. See also Joseph Fletcher, “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46(1) (1986): 11–52; and Peter Perdue, *China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press), pp. 30–32.

¹⁶ Rhoads Murphey, “Some Features of Nomadism in the Ottoman Empire. A Survey Based on Tribal Census and Judicial Appeal Documentation from Archives in Istanbul and Damascus,” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (1984): 190–92.

of water, and the brevity of the growing season discouraged until recent times cultivation of the land outside the scattered oases or on the margins. The latitudinal landscape offered few barriers to the free movement of herds, and the rainfall was generally sufficient to maintain the pasturage. Mountain ranges forming a broken arc around the southern rim of the steppe and deserts rise gradually, permitting grazing up to high elevations. Running mainly from the southwest to northwest, they do not break up the grasslands into discrete ecological niches.¹⁷

All along the Eurasian frontiers warfare and peaceful exchanges alternated in irregular and unpredictable rhythms. For two millennia the equine culture of the steppe nomads gave them a military advantage over the sedentary populations on the margins of the grasslands and steppe. In the words of Peter Perdue, “the horse was both the mainstay of the nomadic economy and the one essential element in warfare which the sedentary civilizations could not breed in sufficient numbers for their own needs.” With the invention of the compound reflex bow, the stirrup, and the archer’s saddle, the mounted warrior long maintained the supremacy of nomadic life in the steppe.¹⁸ Until the sedentary peoples could produce a superior weapons technology, they could not break this dominance. The breakthrough came only with the gunpowder revolution and the manufacture of effective firearms perfected under the centralized leadership of the multicultural agrarian empires.

The best cavalry in the world, however, could not have guaranteed the nomadic predominance. The herds of sheep and cattle were indispensable to the nomadic warrior as a mobile source of food, supplementing their superiority in military technology.¹⁹ Thus, the nomads enjoyed considerable logistical advantages over their sedentary neighbors in large-scale military operations over great distances until military conquests and colonization by intrepid settlers often, but not always, under the protection of centralized bureaucratic states penetrated the steppe.

The stability of commercial relations on the Eurasian frontiers rested on the mutual needs of the nomadic and sedentary populations. The latter sought to obtain mounts bred on the steppes and furs from nomadic hunters and trappers in the northern taiga. The former desired to

¹⁷ Robert Taafe, “The Geographical Setting,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 23–27.

¹⁸ Heerlee G. Cree, *Studies in Early Chinese Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Waverley Press, 1937), pp. 195–96; Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers*, pp. 465–66; and especially William Hardy McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power. Technology, Armed Force and Society since A.D. 1000* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 15–21.

¹⁹ Anatoly Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 28–40, 44–53, 69–72.

obtain tea and manufactured articles from the sedentary population. In addition to trade there were many forms of exchange, ranging from gifts to tribute, that regularized the intercourse between the two ecologies. Aside from the lively exchange in the frontier zones, longer trade patterns developed over the centuries along the margins of the two ecologies. A double track north and south of the Tarim Basin in present-day Xinjiang led through the oases of Transoxenia (Trans Caspia) into Iran, Anatolia, and the Balkans. A “slender dual thread” in the words of René Grousset, the Silk Route (and, after the rise of Islam, the road of pilgrimage), wound its way across deserts, anchored by oases, across high passes and along the central Iranian and Anatolian plateaus to the Mediterranean.²⁰ From time immemorial it had provided a link between the Chinese, Iranian, Indian, and Roman civilizations. Along these same paths Buddhism spread from India to China and, in more spectacular fashion, Arab armies bore the green standard of Islam into western China less than a hundred years after Mohammed. Under their protection Nestorian Christians penetrated into Mongolia. Along these new frontiers of faith a fateful split opened up between the Sunnite and Shi’ia branches of Islam, adding a new dimension to the cultural diversity of Eurasia.

Along this route the tempo of the caravan trade fluctuated over time, but it remained remarkably vital in the frontier economies at least into the seventeenth century. When local political intermediaries failed to provide adequate protection, merchants continued to trade across the borders of the competing states through Sufi brotherhoods, especially the Naqshbandi networks.²¹ In the debate over its subsequent decline, S. A. M. Adsead has provided an ingenious solution. He argues that the worldwide depression of the seventeenth century severely contracted the basic luxury trade along the central land route, but this decline stimulated the ecologically different north–south trade in necessities between the nomadic and sedentary societies. The east–west trade then recovered briefly and weakly in the eighteenth century. By this time, the main north–south trading route had become firmly established under Russian

²⁰ René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes. A History of Trans Caspia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. xxii, 39–41, 48–52, 95–98, quotation on p. 22; Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 10–13.

²¹ Isenbike Togan, “Inner Asian Muslim Merchants at the Closure of the Silk Routes in the Seventeenth Century,” in Vadime Elisseeff (ed.), *The Silk Roads. Highways of Culture and Commerce* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), pp. 247–63.

protection, a fact of enormous importance in understanding the subsequent advance of the Russians into the steppe.²²

A more serious threat to the peace of the frontiers erupted in the form of large-scale migrations of pastoral nomads forced by unfavorable climatic factors or the demographic pressure of more powerful neighbors seeking better grasslands. Each successive wave absorbed remnants of previous migrations, increasing cultural diversity. Sweeping from east to west, periodic population movements disrupted the stable pattern of seasonal meridional migration determined by the availability of grass for the herds. Once the migrating populations had spent their force and the tribal confederations that held them together had broken up, the nomads returned to the north–south pattern of grazing. This cyclical pattern repeated itself until once again, like the movement of trade, the cycle was broken by the conquest states that gradually brought to an end the dominance of the nomadic societies.

Among the earliest recorded mass migration of peoples that sent tremors throughout the sedentary fringes of the grasslands, the Scythians and Huns (Hsiung-nu) were described by both Greco-Roman and Chinese chroniclers, recording their impressions at opposite ends of the Eurasian frontiers. The Chinese did not often differentiate among the nomads to the north, referring to them as *hu* or *ti*, the latter term being especially derogatory, meaning animal-like.²³ Incursions into western Eurasia gave rise to often terrifying images of the nomads that became deeply embedded in the oral culture of the Slavic and Germanic peoples, as exemplified in the epic *Igor Tale* and the *Nibelungenlied*.²⁴ In the process of shaping

²² Morris Rossabi, “The ‘Decline’ of the Trans Caspian Caravan Trade,” in James Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of the Merchant Empires. Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 351–70. See also S. A. M. Adshead, *Central Asia in World History* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), pp. 178–79; Niels Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies. The Structural Crisis in the European–Asia Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1973), p. 170; Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony. The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and André Gunder Frank, *The Centrality of Trans Caspia* (Amsterdam: V.U. University Press, 1992). For a discussion of the literature, see André Gunder Frank, “Trans Caspia’s Continuing Role in the World Economy to 1800,” in Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp (eds.), *Historical Themes and Current Change in Central and Inner Asia. Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia*, No. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 14–38.

²³ Sechin Jagghid and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War, and Trade Along the Great Wall* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 172–73.

²⁴ The Huns were differently mythologized by the Germans as “the scourge of God” and by the Hungarians as the model of a polity. H. de Boor, *Das Attilabild in Geschichte, Legende und der heroisches Dichtung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), vol. II, p. 8; and Winder McConnell, *The Lament of the Nibelungen* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994).

frontiers, the great ancient civilizations of Rome, Persia, and China gave them symbolic as well as military character by distinguishing the “civilized” from the “barbarian.”²⁵ The self-defined “civilized” empires built walls at different times for different purposes. In the Sasanian Empire walls were constructed to defend against Huns, Khazars, and other migrations coming from the Caucasus. In China during the early period of the Warring States (403–221 BC), argues Nicola di Cosmo, “the walls were part of an overall expansionist strategy by Chinese northern states meant to support and protect their penetration into areas thus far alien to the Chou world.” By contrast, Roman walls (*limes*) served both to keep the civilized in and the barbarians outside their perimeters.²⁶

The formation of nomadic states again demonstrates the abilities of nomad societies to alter their relationship with the agricultural societies on the fringes of the steppe. The transformation of a confederation into a nomadic state required a political organization operating at a relatively high level, ruling over an extensive territory, and incorporating both pastoral and agricultural populations under a strong military leader who succeeded, however briefly, in establishing a dynastic succession. The death of the leader or internal rivalries would then lead to a break up of the confederation and a reversion to a fragmented politics. This was the cyclical process first analyzed by Ibn Khaldūn. Unless nomadic states underwent a transformation along sedentary lines like the Qing, Safavid, and Ottoman dynastic empires, they were unlikely to enjoy a long life. The productive process, that is, the management of herds, required a freedom of action that subverted superordinate authority. This was the main reason for “the instability and impermanence of nomadic politics.”²⁷ Moreover, the stronger the residue of nomadic practices in the construction of a sedentary empire, the greater the resistance to centralized control and the weaker the capacity of the state to compete in the struggle over the Eurasian borderlands.

²⁵ The Chinese idea of an inner and outer zone can be traced to remote antiquity. Lien-sheng Yang, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 21.

²⁶ Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 68–69, 84, 110, 120–39; Richard N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p. 14; C. R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire. A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Brian J. Boeck, “Containment vs. Colonization. Muscovite Approaches to Settling the Steppe,” in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (eds.), *Peopling the Russian Periphery. Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 41–60.

²⁷ Khazanov, *Nomads*, pp. 44–53, 149–52, 164 ff.

Political unity under the Mongols

The Mongols were the most successful of the nomadic peoples in overcoming the obstacles posed by ecological and cultural diversities to create a vast land empire stretching over the 6,000-mile longitudinal expanse of Eurasia. After the rise of the multicultural bureaucratic empires, only the Russians would duplicate that feat, first under the tsars and then under the Bolsheviks. For this reason, perhaps, the two imperial enterprises have been conflated into an oversimplified concept of Eurasia, exaggerating the organic link between them. The image of the “Mongol yoke” runs like a guiding thread through the writing of Russian history. The earliest image of a wholly destructive Mongol impact on Russia was assiduously promoted by the so-called Muscovite book men of the sixteenth century who sought to weaken Tatar influences in the court. It was later embellished by nationalist Russian historians and became common currency in the grand narrative of Russian history.²⁸ It inspired the first Russian Eurasianists. It was then taken up by the Bolsheviks, enshrined in Stalin’s famous speech denouncing Russia’s backwardness, and surfaced again during the Sino-Soviet polemics over their disputed frontier.²⁹ Whatever the Mongol influence on Russian administrative and financial practices, or even concepts of rulership, its powerful presence and the myths that it spawned played an indisputable role in the subsequent struggle over the borderlands.³⁰

The uniqueness of the Mongol Empire has been attributed by Thomas Barfield to its high degree of centralization; it was not “the culmination of a long evolving steppe tradition, but a deviation from it.”³¹ Three factors underlay the success of the Mongol conquest: the superior command structure and tactics of the army; the incorporation of weapons technology borrowed from China that enabled them to conduct siege warfare; and their synthesis of Turkic and Chinese styles of statecraft and ideological legitimization. Their success in governance also reflected their understanding of two distinctive ecologies. “In the north the Mongols revived and extended older tributary relationships between steppe and

²⁸ Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols. Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), “Introduction” and pp. 244–45.

²⁹ Charles J. Halperin, “The Tatar Yoke and Tatar Oppression,” *Russia Mediaevalis* 5 (1984): 25. See also Stephen Kotkin, “Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance in Post Mongol Space,” *Kritika* 8(3) (2007): 487–531.

³⁰ David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), vol. I, esp. pp. 412–18.

³¹ Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier. Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 197.



Map 1.1 The Mongol Empire, 1241

forest long characterized by indirect and intermittent methods of control.” To the south they imposed new political structures on the agrarian societies they conquered. Perhaps their most important innovation was the “transfer of technicians of governance” between the Islamic and Chinese civilizations.³² Interpretations of their conquest as having either saddled peoples with a Mongol yoke or presided over a Pax Mongolica reveal the complexity of its impact.³³ But both interpretations admit its initial devastating impact on societies as widely dispersed as North China, Kievan Rus, Iran, the Caucasus, and Hungary, encompassing a wide arc all along the frontiers of the grasslands. In a series of campaigns lasting from 1213 to 1234, the Mongols subjugated the major cities of North China, inflicting heavy losses on both the urban and rural populations, and imposing a heavy burden of labor conscription and taxes. They were not interested in rebuilding at the local level. But they fashioned a multi-cultural administration out of a complex amalgam of Chinese, Jürchen, Khitan, Uighur, and Mongol peoples that “was typical of the hybrid politics that had formed along China’s steppe frontier since the collapse of the Han dynasty.”³⁴ Over the following century, the Mongol rulers of the new Yuan dynasty hardly adapted at all to Chinese customs. But when they withdrew from China in 1368 many of their Inner Asian allies remained behind, testifying to the assimilating power of Chinese culture.³⁵

Moving west, the Mongols devastated the two major centers of Russian urban and commercial life: the towns scattered along the upper Volga, Oka, and western Dvina, and those in the southwest along the Dnieper and its tributaries. Only Novgorod on the Baltic littoral was spared. Ruined centers like Kursk and Voronezh in the wooded steppe were not

³² See the essays in David Sneath (ed.), *Imperial Statecraft. Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth–Twentieth Centuries* (Bellingham, WA: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 2006), esp. Thomas T. Allsen, “Technologies of Governance in the Mongolian Empire: A Geographic Overview,” pp. 117–39, quotations pp. 135, 138.

³³ A more balanced picture has emerged. See, for example, Larry Moses, *The Political Role of Mongol Buddhism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 1–82, who stresses Mongol policies of religious toleration, and, more generally, Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), esp. pp. 21–43, stressing skillful diplomacy and administrative practices.

³⁴ Thomas T. Allsen, “The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian Rule in North China,” in Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 359–64, quotation on p. 362; and David O. Morgan, “Mongols,” in H. A. R. Gibb et al. (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edn (Leiden: Brill, 1993), vol. VII, p. 232.

³⁵ Frederick W. Mote, “Chinese Society under Mongol Rule, 1215–1368,” in *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, pp. 644–48.

re-founded for three centuries; Kiev was reduced to a virtual ghost town, its vibrant economic life crippled for two centuries.³⁶ The Mongol domination over the Russian principalities, although indirect, deprived them of their sovereignty, and imposed heavy financial burdens. It shifted the political center of Russian life from the steppe to the forest zone, facilitating the rise of Muscovy with profound consequences for Eurasian history.

The Mongol invasion of Poland was brief. The country was not occupied like Hungary or incorporated into the Mongol (Qipchak) Empire like the Russian principalities. It was not even systematically looted. Although the Mongols defeated the Poles at the battle of Legnica (Liegnitz), the Poles converted defeat into a moral victory. The gallantry of their heavy cavalry inspired the Polish nobility to assume the mantle of defender of European civilization against the barbarism of the East, one of those enduring historical myths that resurfaced from time to time in Polish history. More concretely, the Poles joined with their Lithuanian neighbors to take advantage of the devastation of the Kievan lands in order to occupy territories ruled by west Russian princes and incorporate them into their expanding multicultural state.³⁷

The two invasions of Hungary in 1241–1242 and 1285, and Mongol raids thereafter into the mid-fourteenth century, had long-term damaging material and psychological effects.³⁸ Widespread destruction, virtual depopulation of some regions, and a shift in the international trade routes from the east hampered recovery that was further delayed by a prolonged struggle between royal and noble authority. In order to repopulate large areas of the country, the monarchy invited another nomadic people, the Cumans, to settle in the Great Plain, further delaying the evolution of formal juridical and property rights. It also granted German “guests” extensive privileges in the royal manors of the north, foreshadowing the subsequent domination of urban life by non-Magyars. Even greater

³⁶ While the north recovered more rapidly, the ruined towns of the steppe remained exposed to nomadic raids. Cf. M. N. Tikhomirov, *The Towns of Ancient Rus'* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), who stresses the destructive aspect; and R. A. French, “The Urban Network of Later Medieval Russia,” in George Demko and Roland J. Fuchs (eds.), *Geographic Studies on the Soviet Union. Essays in Honor of Chauncey D. Harris* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), who gives a figure of forty new towns in northeast Russia for the end of the thirteenth century. The discrepancy is reconciled by J. L. I. Fennel, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200–1304* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 86–89, who argues for serious but patchy destruction.

³⁷ A. Bruce Boswell, “Territorial Division and the Mongol Invasion, 1202–1300,” in W. F. Reddaway (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Poland from the Origins to Sobieski (to 1696)* (Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 92–93.

³⁸ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West* (Harlow: Longmans, 2004), pp. 68–70, 202–5, 212. From this time Hungarians considered themselves a “front-line state” against the barbarians to the east, *ibid.*, p. 200.

numbers of Slav and Vlach immigrants poured in from the north and southeast. Although many were assimilated, many were not.³⁹

The south Caucasus endured three Mongol invasions in the early thirteenth century that crushed local resistance, reduced the power of the Georgian kings, and splintered political authority in the region. By engaging in periodic raiding throughout the south Caucasus, the Mongols uprooted local inhabitants, further jumbling the already highly mixed population of the region. As a strategic land bridge and a mountain refuge from nomadic raids, the region had a long history as a frontier between the Roman-Byzantine and Persian Empires, and the early Christian kingdoms and the Islamic conquest. Repeatedly ravaged by invasion and destabilized by migration and flight, the region displayed the classic features of a shatter zone with its heterogeneous population, contested identities, and rapidly shifting frontiers.⁴⁰ The Mongols controlled the region indirectly, as in Russia, collecting tribute and playing the local princes against one another. Here, as elsewhere, the Mongols spared those who accepted their authority. The Armenians, as dependent allies, were able to expand their mountain kingdom into the plains of Mesopotamia and Syria after the Mongols had destroyed the Muslim principalities that offered them resistance.⁴¹ Another series of Tatar–Mongol invasions in the fourteenth century led by Timur-i-lang brought an end to a brief revival of Georgian royal power and cut a wide swath of destruction. The decline of urban life was catastrophic. Severely weakened and internally split into warring factions, the Georgian princes were no match for the Ottomans and Iranians advancing in the early fifteenth century on their southwestern and southeastern flanks.⁴²

³⁹ Pal Engel, "The Age of the Angevins, 1301–1382," in Peter Sugar (ed.), *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 48; Lázsló Kuntler, *Millennium in Central Europe. A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999), pp. 80–81; András Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians* (Budapest: Corvina, 1989), pp. 54–61.

⁴⁰ Hayrapet Margarian, "The Nomads and Ethnopolitical Realities of Transcaucasus in the 11–14th Centuries," in *Iran and the Caucasus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), vol. V, pp. 75–78; Cyril Toumanoff, "Armeno-Georgian Marchlands," in *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), pp. 437–84.

⁴¹ Peter B. Golden, "The Turkic Peoples and Caucasia," in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *Transcaucasus, Nationalism and Social Change. Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia*, rev. edn (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 62–66; Angus David Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks. War and Diplomacy during the Reign of Het'um II* (The Hague: Mouton, 2001), pp. 43–46.

⁴² W. E. D. Allen, *A History of the Georgian People from the Beginning to the Russian Conquest in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), pp. 125–27, 137–39; Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 40–46.

In Trans Caspia, the Mongol conquest of Khwarazm (Qwarezm), a Muslim state based on the great oases cities of Transoxania, leveled such flourishing centers as Balkh, Nishapur, and Herat. After a short siege Bukhara was reduced to such a pitiable state, according to Muslim chroniclers, that not enough people were left to populate a single neighborhood in the city.⁴³ The second generation of Mongol conquerors, the successors of Chingghis Khan, invaded Iran, inflicting enormous damage on Baghdad and other urban centers. Iran never fully recovered economically from the destruction of its extensive irrigation system.⁴⁴

In the south Caucasus, south Russia, and Hungary the short-term Mongol impact was, with a few local exceptions, to weaken or destroy established institutions and patterns of socioeconomic life. But elsewhere the picture was not uniform, and continues to be much disputed by scholars and myth makers. On the positive side, under a Pax Mongolica the Mongol princes preserved and expanded the ancient trade routes, forming close alliances with international merchants not only to promote exchange, but also to gather intelligence.⁴⁵ Under their aegis a Turko-Persian culture flourished in Trans Caspia and parts of Inner Asia, although its homogeneity has been questioned. After their conversion to Islam, the Mongol princes observed a policy of tolerance toward other religions. Mongol arts and crafts contributed to the development of a highly refined Eurasian style.⁴⁶ But the political unity imposed by the Mongols on Eurasia only lasted a hundred years. Their attempt to create a unitary empire with a strong central government was undermined by the policy of parceling out territories and armies to the descendants of Chingghis Khan, which contributed to the revival of earlier ethnic and tribal loyalties, and the increased Turkification of many of the successor states. The result was a cultural decline and the restoration of nomadic

⁴³ Luc Kwanten, *Imperial Nomads. A History of Central Asia, 500–1500* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), pp. 118–20.

⁴⁴ Morgan, "Mongols," p. 231; John A. Boyle (trans.), *The Successors of Ghengis Khan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); and Berthold Spüler, *Die Mongolen in Iran. Politik, Verwaltung und Kultur de Ilchane-Zeit, 1220–1350* (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 1955).

⁴⁵ Thomas T. Allsen, "Mongol Princes and their Merchant Partners, 1200–1260," *Asia Major*, 2nd series, 2 (1989): 83–125; and E. Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yuan China. The Ortoy," *Asia Major*, 3rd series, 2 (1989): 127–45.

⁴⁶ Robert L. Canfield, "Introduction: The Turko-Persian Tradition," in *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), esp. the essays by Amitai-Preiss and Ann K. S. Lambton; Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism. The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia and the Islamic Lands, 1251–1259* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).

ways of life in the steppes and oases of the Inner Asian core of imperial power.⁴⁷

Following the break up of the Mongol Empire, a number of Mongol or Turko-Mongol successor states established themselves on its former territory: the Yuan dynasty in China; the Il-khans in Iran; the khanates of Sibir, Kazan, and Astrakhan; and smaller khanates in the oases of Trans Caspia and the south Caucasus. But none of them sought to restore the unity of Eurasia. They proved to be relatively short-lived. By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries the new major centers of power were beginning to emerge that would dominate the history of Eurasia and the struggle over the borderlands over the following 400 years. Although nomadic tribes founded three of them, the Ottoman, Safavid, and Qing empires, they rapidly adapted, shifting their centers of power to the agricultural lands to the south of the steppe, and adopted the bureaucratic structures and cultural trappings of imperial rule. Like the agrarian states of Muscovy, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the (Austrian) Habsburg Empire, they built their power on the periphery of the Mongol Empire and expanded militarily along their outer frontiers, incorporating new territories as imperial borderlands by applying a variety of strategies ranging from dynastic alliances to conquest, colonization, and conversion. This process profoundly affected the course of state-building. The following section explores imperial frontier strategies as an introduction to the evolution of imperial ideologies and institutions to be taken up in the next two chapters.

The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire had its origins in one of the great migrations of Turkic tribes and tribal confederations coming out of Trans Caspia. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Turkic tribes, already dominant in the sedentary areas of Trans Caspia, moved west and south. Within a century, they were pressing against the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire in eastern Anatolia. The Byzantines who bore the brunt of this massive migration did not see them as one nation. They referred to them by many names, and attributed to them different, even obscure, religious practices. The Turks were conscious of being one people.⁴⁸ In Anatolia, Armenia,

⁴⁷ Peter B. Golden, “‘I Will Give the People Unto Thee.’ The Činggisid Conquests and their Aftermath in the Turkish World,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd series, 10(1) (April 2000): 21–41.

⁴⁸ N. Oikonomides, “The Turks in the Byzantine Rhetoric of the Twelfth Century,” in C. E. Farah (ed.), *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire* (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson Press, 1993), pp. 140–60.

Kurdistan, and northern Syria their tribal dynasties established semi-independent principalities, which were unified by the Seljuk dynasty (1040–1118). The Turkic nomadic cavalry formed part of the Seljuk armies that reunited the Islamic lands from the Mediterranean to Trans Caspia. When the Mongols overwhelmed the Seljuk Empire, their ranks were swelled by new groups of Islamicized Turkic tribes who settled along the old Byzantine–Seljuk frontier. Among the smaller Muslim principalities, the Turkic Osmanlı were by no means the most powerful. But under skillful leadership they absorbed other tribal groups, forming the basis of the Ottoman Empire. Beginning in the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Turks crossed from Anatolia into the Balkans, advancing over the following two centuries into the Danubian Basin, Pontic steppe, the Caucasus, and Trans Caspia, where they subsequently encountered the expanding power of the Habsburgs, Russians, and Iranians.

The Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine Empire, and the smaller kingdoms and principalities in the Balkans, culminated in their capture of Constantinople in 1453. To consolidate their imperial rule they employed a combination of colonization, conversion, and the co-optation of elites. The Ottoman conquest of the Balkans took place in two stages, from 1352 to 1402 and from 1415 to 1467 as a gradual process, beginning with a series of raids that forced the local ruler to accept Ottoman suzerainty and pay tribute. When circumstances permitted, the ruling elites were replaced by Ottoman administrators and soldiers.⁴⁹ There is still considerable debate among historians over the relative weight to be assigned to colonization and conversion in explaining the imposition of Ottoman control. The idea that the Ottoman state promoted and directed a mass Turkic colonization to inundate the local population has been refuted and replaced by a more complex picture of piecemeal and spontaneous movement of nomads and semi-nomads into the Balkans.⁵⁰ The indisputable result was the creation of a vast shatter zone.

During the early period of Ottoman expansion, the sultans preserved, and in some cases expanded, the role of nomadic tribes, creating, in the felicitous expression of Reşat Kasaba, “a moveable empire.”⁵¹ The rulers devised special rules for regulating tribal affairs, classified the tribes, and

⁴⁹ Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103–29.

⁵⁰ Antonina Zhelyazkova, “Islamization in the Balkans,” in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqui (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans. A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 231–35. Cf. Omar Barkan, “Déportation comme méthode de peuplement et de colonisation dans l’empire Ottoman,” *Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Memuası* (1946–1950), vol. XI, pp. 524–69; vol. XIII, pp. 56–79; vol. XV, pp. 209–329.

⁵¹ Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire. Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009).

appointed tribal officials to administer and collect taxes. They governed relations between the nomads and the sedentary population, and protected the migratory routes. The nomadic tribes performed important functions throughout the empire in providing networks of trade and communications, but were especially valued on the expanding frontiers. They were used to occupy conquered areas where the political structures were weak and local communities disrupted or dispersed. They operated as a powerful military force in the early centuries when cavalry was the dominant branch of armies. In the fourteenth century in the Balkans the spontaneous migration of 10,000 nomads linking up with Vlachs and Albanians prepared the way for subsequent conquest by the regular army. In the fifteenth century, Çepni Turkmens from the Black Sea region were resettled in northern Albania. The government also resorted to forced migration to punish recalcitrants. In 1502, landed families in frontier districts of eastern Anatolia who sympathized with the Iranian Safavids from eastern Anatolia were forcibly resettled in the Morea, and in the 1570s rebellious tribesmen from eastern Anatolia were transported to Cyprus.⁵²

During the evolution from a nomadic-tribal organization to a sedentary-imperial state, especially after the conquest of Constantinople, population transfers were also used to strengthen urban economies. Having conquered Constantinople with its depleted Greek population, Mehmed II ordered the mass resettlement of peasants from the newly conquered lands of Serbia and Morea to the neighborhood of his new capital, renamed Istanbul. In 1455, he uprooted all the Jewish communities in the Balkans and resettled them in Istanbul to stimulate its economic life. Throughout his reign he continued to bring in other ethnic groups, Armenians, Greeks, and Muslims, to repopulate the capital.⁵³

Conversion to the Sunni branch of Islam seems to have played a larger role in Islamicization of the Balkans than colonization, although firm numbers are hard to come by. The process of conversion too has engendered a vigorous debate between historians who emphasize either voluntary, "social conversion," or forced conversion. There is evidence on both sides. Beginning in the early fifteenth century, the conscription of non-Muslim, mainly peasant, boys to fill the ranks of the elite military formation of the Janissary Corps provided about 200,000 forced converts to Islam, although the institution was also regarded by some Christian families as a means of upward social mobility.

⁵² Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 109.

⁵³ Halil Inalcik, "Istanbul," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, vol. IV, pp. 224–48.

With the exception of the janissaries, conversion began slowly, according to Anton Minkov, passing through three periods: “the innovators” and “early adopters,” complete by the 1530s; and the “early majority,” accelerating in the 1640s and reaching its peak in the second quarter of the eighteenth century when an estimated 50 percent of the Muslim population of the Balkans were converts. In the eighteenth century, conversion came to a sudden halt. This was due in part to a rise in fundamentalism, which placed greater demands upon the convert, and in part to social and economic changes, which whittled away the practical advantages of conversion. By 1831, the total percentage of Muslims in the Balkans had declined to 37 percent. But the pattern of distribution varied greatly. Muslims were particularly strong in the borderlands facing the Habsburg Empire: reaching figures of over 70 percent in Albania and Kosovo; almost 40 percent in Macedonia; and 50 percent in Bosnia and Hercegovina.⁵⁴

The widespread voluntary conversion of the Bosnian nobility and peasantry to Islam was exceptional in the long frontiers between Christianity and Islam. There is some debate about why this should have been so. A number of factors appear to have played a role; all of them were, however, due to “the privileged position Bosnia had acquired as already in the sixteenth century as the crucial frontier province of Ottoman Europe.” In part, the decision to convert reflected the peculiar features of Bosnian socioeconomic life. The Ottoman policy of granting *timars* (land in return for service to the state) to the local Christian elite and their conversion to Islam was followed by the conversion of their peasants and dependent people. Concurrently, peasants converted to escape the heavy labor services of their Christian landlords.⁵⁵ In part, conversion was facilitated by the lack of a well-defined frontier of faith in the region. At the outer edges

⁵⁴ Anton Minkov, *Conversion to Islam in the Balkans* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 43–61, 195–98. For a critique of the view that there were large-scale conversions in the Sofia region and, by implication, elsewhere in the eastern Balkans, see Géza Dávid, “Limitations of Conversion: Muslims and Christians in the Balkans in the Sixteenth Century,” in Eszter Andor and István György Tóth (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith. Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750* (Budapest: European Science Foundation, 2001), pp. 149–54. Under the reign of Mehmed IV (1648–1687), who united his personal piety with his military prowess, conversions spread to new borderlands of Crete and Podolia in Poland. It was said that even his hunting expeditions brought converts into the fold. Marc David Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam. Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 160–61, 177–78.

⁵⁵ Fikret Adanir, “The Formation of a Muslim Nation in Bosnia-Hercegovina. A Historiographic Discussion,” in Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqui (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans. A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 267–304, quotation on p. 295.

of the ancient division between Greek and Latin Christianity, “no faith had a strong organization to bind its flock to the church either through faith or beliefs or a sense of community,” in the words of John V. A. Fine, “changing religion was a general multidirectional phenomenon.”⁵⁶ Local folk traditions common to both Christianity and Islam coexisted and mingled. The boundary between them was easily crossed.

In the regions of Dalmatia and Slavonia the main lines of religious struggle did not take place between Muslims and Christians, but between the Christian churches. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Orthodox and Catholic hierarchies competed fiercely for spiritual care over the Christian population and the right to collect taxes from them.⁵⁷ By contrast, the Ottomans were even-handed in their treatment of the established Christian churches. Soon after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia, Mehmed II gave permission for the Franciscan Order to establish monasteries, which became centers of learning in the region. By the seventeenth century, the Bosnian Franciscans, who had been born subjects of the sultan, enjoyed greater freedom of action in their missionary activities than their main Catholic rivals, the Jesuits, who were considered by the Ottomans to be agents of the Habsburg Empire and therefore the enemy. Their linguistic abilities also gave the Franciscans the edge in the Banat, where the majority of the population spoke either a south Slavic tongue or Romanian, which was close to the Italian spoken by the Franciscans coming from Dalmatia. In Hungary, they could fall back on Latin which was still the lingua franca in what was otherwise a Babel of tongues. As late as the nineteenth century, the monks were the first in the province, and apparently in the empire, to compile a modern Turkish dictionary and develop a center of Turkology.⁵⁸

The role of Ottoman frontiers in state-building emerged from the fusion of three cultural streams: Islamic messianism; the Turkic warrior ethos; and the Byzantine imperial tradition. The founders of the Ottoman

⁵⁶ John V. A. Fine, “The Medieval and Ottoman Roots of Modern Bosnian Society,” in Mark Pinson (ed.), *The Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The Historic Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 13, 16.

⁵⁷ Milo Bogović, *Katolička crkva i pravoslavlje u Dalmaciji za vrijeme mletačke vladavine* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1993); Josip Buturac, *Katolička crkva u Slavoniji za turskoga vladanja* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 1982). I am grateful to Drago Rokсандić for bringing these sources to my attention.

⁵⁸ István-György Tóth, “Les missionnaires franciscains venus de l'étranger en Hongrie au XVII^e siècle avant la période de reconquête catholique,” *XVII^e siècle* 50 (1998): 222, 225–29; Ekrem Čaušević, “A Church of Bosnian Turkology. The Franciscans and the Turkish Language,” in Markus Kaller and Kemal H. Karpat (eds.), *Ottoman Bosnia. A History in Peril* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 241–53.

frontier thesis, Paul Wittek and Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, made a distinction in the early period of Ottoman expansion between the core and the frontier in terms of social structure and cultural characteristics. Köprülü, influenced by the Annales School, took a broader view of the frontier, embracing its distinctive religious, legal, economic, and artistic institutions. Wittek stressed the *gazi* warrior milieu rooted in Islamic religious zeal. By the thirteenth century, warrior cultures had appeared on both sides of the contested Turkic–Byzantine frontier. They were originally composed of Islamic *gazis* and Greek *akritai*, but were increasingly replaced by Turkmen tribesmen recruited from the other side. In this intermediate zone war and trade often alternated in a pattern similar to that on the ancient Roman and Chinese frontiers, and facilitated the penetration and conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks.⁵⁹

Research in frontier narratives and subsequent Islamic religious texts have now demonstrated that the *gazi* concept of the early Ottoman state meant different things to different people, reflecting various interests that were vigorously promoted by rulers, frontier warriors, and the ulama. Historians now substitute for the “Ghazi Thesis” an Islamo-Christian syncretism.⁶⁰ Although the early Ottoman state can no longer be equated with the idea of jihad or holy war, there is no denying that it represented the spirit of conquest that lay at the foundations of Ottoman state-building.

The Ottoman ruling elite employed the term *ḡihad*, derived from the precepts of Islam and imbued with both military and spiritual aspects, to represent the division of the world into two cultural spheres, the *dār ul-Islām*, the abode of Islam, and the *dār ul-harb*, the abode of war. Between them stretched contested space where warriors fought the just war consecrated by Islam. This provided the ruling elites with a justification for expansion in all directions. But this rigid duality could not be strictly maintained.

⁵⁹ Paul Wittek, *La formation de l'empire ottoman* (London: Valerium Reprints, 1982). See also Halil Inalcik (a student of Köprülü), “The Impact of the Annales School on Ottoman Studies and New Findings,” *Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center* 1(3/4) (1978): 69–96. Reviews of Wittek’s critics and defenders are Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 35–59; Colin Heywood, “The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths,” in Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (eds.), *Frontiers in Question. Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 228–50.

⁶⁰ Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 142–43; Linda T. Darling, “Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context,” *Studia Islamica* (2000): 133–63. See also Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*; Colin Imber, *Studies in Ottoman History and Law* (Istanbul: Isis, 1996).

The Ottoman rulers created frontier marches (*uc*) under the leadership of frontier lords who enjoyed considerable autonomy. In return they were obliged to furnish armed men, both Muslims and Christians, as frontier troops.⁶¹ The image of the Islamic warrior tradition eroded over the following centuries, changing the process and rationalization of state-building.

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was the first major turning point that spelled the beginning of the end of the Ottoman concept of the ever-expanding frontier and the beginning of an imperial state system.⁶² Soon thereafter the Ottoman sultans began to authorize the demarcation of boundary lines with Christian states, first with the Venetian Republic. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the Ottomans signed a series of peace agreements with Hungary, Poland, and the Habsburgs signifying at least temporarily the existence of a power equilibrium. Even more pragmatically, they recognized the autonomy of vassal borderlands adjoining complex frontiers, such as the Crimean khanate and the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, to avoid the costs and uncertainties of military expeditions far from their home bases.

The second major turning point in the Ottoman concept of frontiers was the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. Bringing to an end a long war with the Habsburgs, it signaled another step away from the concept of the ever-expanding frontier justified by jihad to a more defensive posture relying more on mediation and fixed boundaries recognized by international treaties with Christian states. As Virginia Aksan has written, “the psychological impact of the abandonment of the idea of the ‘ever expanding frontier’ of Islam should not be underestimated.”⁶³ That this treaty signified “a formal closure of the Ottoman frontier” is, however, somewhat misleading.⁶⁴ Once the forward movement of the Ottoman *gazi* warriors had been checked, internal forces worked to weaken the Ottoman frontier defenses and reverse the process, creating new frontiers and accelerating the process of internal instability.

After Karlowitz, the sultans began to restrict the movement of nomads and attempted to settle them on vacant or under-populated land. The

⁶¹ Colin Imber, “The Legend of the Osman Gazi,” in E. Zachariadou (ed.), *The Ottoman Emirate (1300–1389)* (Rethymnon: University of Crete Press, 1993), pp. 67–75; Heywood, “The Frontier,” pp. 233–35.

⁶² Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 152.

⁶³ Virginia H. Aksan, “Locating the Ottomans among Early Modern Empires,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 2 (1999): 110.

⁶⁴ Cf. Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, “The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699–1703,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89(3) (July–September 1969): 467–70.

central authorities were already concerned about the effect of the wandering population in the internal provinces. Between around 1600 to the mid-nineteenth century there was a general movement from the plains into the mountains primarily in order to escape irregular demands for tribute and taxes related to frontier wars. The continuous presence of nomads added to the deteriorating sense of security.⁶⁵ The flight of the tax-paying population to less accessible environments created both a fiscal and security problem. The burden of taxes fell on a diminishing population, increasing their discontent and resistance; the mountains provided not only a refuge, but hospitable terrain for armed bands. In periods following the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries against the Habsburgs, discharged Muslim peasants recruited into paramilitary bands roamed the countryside, forming bandit gangs that terrorized the countryside.

As the frontier receded further in the eighteenth century, nomadic warriors who continued the *gazi* tradition and lived from booty were forced to retreat, thereby losing the source of their livelihood. Disdainful of agricultural pursuits, they turned to brigandage and periodically incited rebellion. They were joined by elements of the local peasantry who were protesting against the growing tax burden. This was the origin of the *hayduk* (bandit) movement. Even before the national liberation movements in the early nineteenth century, armed bands raised the level of violence in this vast shatter zone to new levels.

The Ottoman Empire faced similar problems in defending its Islamic frontiers. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, Turkmen migrations repeatedly created friction between the Ottomans and the Iranians. The long-disputed frontier between the Ottoman and Safavid empires was a shatter zone par excellence, inhabited by Arabs, Kurds, Muslim Georgians (*Adjary*), and Laz; nor was there a clear-cut line dividing the Sunni and Shi'ia populations. The population was mainly nomadic because the climate of the region was inhospitable to sedentary life. Both the Ottoman and Safavid empires sought to recruit local tribes in the endemic warfare between them over a century and a half. Pastoral nomads called Boz-Ulus virtually paralyzed the Ottoman government when the Iranians counterattacked in their long war with the Ottomans.⁶⁶ After the peace of Zuhab in 1639 the frontier remained fairly

⁶⁵ Wolf-Dieter Hütheroth, "Ecology of the Ottoman Lands," in Suraiya N. Faroqui (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 32–35.

⁶⁶ Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman State, Economy and Society, 1300–1600* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 24, 32, 40, 96, 165–66; İnalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1700," *Archivum Ottomanicum* VI (1980): 284–87.

stable, though not clearly delimited between Iraq and Iran until the twentieth century.⁶⁷

After Mehmed II conquered the Greek Empire of Trebizond, the last of the Greek successor states to Byzantium, most of the Christian population converted to Sunni Islam. Only a minority remained in the Orthodox Church. Under Ottoman rule Turkmen tribes occupied the arable valleys, driving the remaining Greeks into the highlands where they remained until the population exchanges following the First World War. Migrations of Turkmen nomads into eastern Anatolia continued into the eighteenth century. The arrival of the Çepni Turkmens in the eighteenth century corresponded with the rise of the great dynasties of the lords of the valley (*derebeys*). They long enjoyed virtually complete local independence from the Ottoman center of power, continuing an ancient tradition going back to Byzantine times.⁶⁸ Once at the cutting-edge of imperial expansion, increasingly Turkmen nomads became one of the most destabilizing social elements not only in the borderlands, but in the imperial center of power.⁶⁹

In the south Caucasus, Ottoman frontier policy achieved greater success along the Black Sea coast than in the highlands of Armenia and Kurdistan. The Circassians and Georgians were drawn into the commercial life of the Black Sea dominated by the Turks, and they supplied highly valued slaves to the armies and harems of the sultan. But once the Turks attempted to drive the Iranians out of the highlands they encountered stiff resistance from the mountain tribes. Subsequently, the Russians, much to their grief, inherited this resistance to their establishment of a secure southern frontier.⁷⁰

The third major turning point in the Ottoman concept of frontiers occurred at the end of the eighteenth century. The reconquest of Belgrade from the Habsburgs in 1739 was the last gasp of Ottoman expansion, followed by a period of deceptive calm along the west Balkan and Danubian frontiers, which was brought to an end by the massive intervention of Russia on the frontiers. This dramatic turning point in the struggle over the borderlands is taken up in Chapter 4.

⁶⁷ Rudi Matthee, "The Safavid–Ottoman Frontier. Iraq-i Arab as seen by the Safavids," Kemal Karpat with Robert W. Zens (eds.), *Ottoman Borderlands. Issues, Personalities and Political Changes* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 170–71.

⁶⁸ Anthony Bryer, "The Last Laz Risings and the Downfall of the Pontic Derebeys, 1812–1840," in *Peoples and Settlements in Anatolia and the Caucasus, 800–1900* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1988), pp. 191–99.

⁶⁹ Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans*.

⁷⁰ Carl Max Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism during the Reformation. Europe and the Caucasus* (New York University Press, 1972); B. A. Gardanova et al. (eds.), *Narody Kavkaza*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Akademiia nauk, 1962), vol. II, p. 376.

The Iranian empires

In Iran the early stage of state-building under the Safavid dynasty was, like the Ottoman, launched by a nomadic military enterprise operating from a frontier environment. Like its Qajar successors, the founders of the dynasty were Turkic tribesmen from the rich pasture lands of the Iranian frontier province of Azerbaijan in the south Caucasus. Still in touch with their nomadic heritage, they retained their faith in the radical and chiliastic sects related to the Shi'ite branch of Islam. The Safavid dynasty, like its imperial predecessors, confronted a threatening nomadic presence on its frontiers from three directions: the Caucasian isthmus; the north, facing the Turkmens; and the northeast, facing the Afghans. The defense and expansion of its frontiers depended upon the ability of charismatic Turkic tribal leaders, like Shah Ismail and Shah Abbas, to conquer the outer lands by combining military skills with universalist claims of Shi'ia messianism. Tribal allegiances fluctuated depending on frontier conditions. The Kurds in particular were notorious for switching loyalties. The Shahsevan tribal confederacy turned to cross-border banditry when their traditional way of life was threatened and their pastoral territory was divided after two Russo-Iranian wars in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century they had become one of the most highly unstable social groups in Iran.⁷¹ In the early twentieth century, a quarter of the population was still nomadic. As one leading authority put it: "tribal groups have occupied Iran's borders for centuries because the peripheries of state power were where the tribal formations flourished and tribal groups endured."⁷²

Aside from the tribal frontiers, there were also several religious frontiers: Shi'ia–Sunni in the west, with the Ottomans and in Trans Caspia with the Uzbeks; and Islamic–Christian in the Caucasus with Georgia. Yet here, too, the confessional lines were not rigid even though the early Safavids attempted to convert the non-Shi'ia population. The existence of the mystical Sufi sects of Sunni Islam added another complexity to Iran's religious frontiers. Though persecuted, they survived among the tribes in the frontier zone. There they became involved in frequent

⁷¹ Richard Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran. A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷² Lois Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Iran," in Philip Khoury and J. Kostiner, *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 201.

rebellions against the authority of a centralized state.⁷³ Passing through a belt of shatter zones, Iranian frontiers were among the most ill-defined, porous, and fluctuating among the Islamic states, indeed, of all Eurasia.

Although similarly vague and changing, the concept of *Iranshahr* has nonetheless persisted from the fall of the Sasanian Empire until the present day. It was highly fluid without reference to ethnic or religious boundaries. As in the Ottoman Empire, the idea of the ever-expanding frontier prevailed among the rulers well into the nineteenth century. At its height in the 1660s *Iranshahr* extended in the east from the oasis of Merv in Transoxenia and Qandahar in Afghanistan to Daghestan, Armenia, and Kurdistan in the west. At times the concept was infused with delusions of grandeur: “The hunger for empire emerged vividly in Qajar narratives.” The founder of the dynasty, Aqa Muhammad Khan, admitted to seeking to restore Iran’s “natural boundaries” from the mountains of the Caucasus to the Punjab. Qa’im Maqam Farahani, the chief minister of the heir to the throne, Abbās Mīrzā, urged the crown prince to seize the occasion of Tsar Alexander I’s death in 1825 “to seize Crimea and Moscow from the Tsar and proceed to conquer Russia and Rum.” Even after the Iranians were forced to renounce all claims on Afghan territory in the mid-nineteenth century, many Iranians continued to view Herat as part of their patrimony.⁷⁴ The idea died hard among Iranian intellectuals and officials that the acquisition and defense of land was the symbolic measure of imperial rule.⁷⁵

Like the Ottoman Empire, Iran suffered large territorial losses and a contraction of its frontiers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Retreat was accompanied by a greater secularization of the state. In both cases, this meant a withering away of the last vestiges of messianism and the real end to the ever-expanding frontier of *Iranshahr*.

The Chinese empires

Before the advent of the Qing dynasty (1644–1918), the Chinese had devised, in the words of A. I. Johnston, two alternating “strategic

⁷³ Hamid Algar, “Religious Forces in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Iran,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 7, pp. 705–31; Lawrence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 11–12, 102.

⁷⁴ Nikki R. Keddie, *Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, 1796–1925* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), pp. 32–33.

⁷⁵ Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions. Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 15–16, 19, 22–23.

cultures” to deal with the outer world in general and the Inner Asian frontiers in particular. The first he labeled “Confucian,” which emphasizes defensive warfare and a preference for negotiation in dealing with barbarians. The second he calls *parabellum*, which assumes the inevitability of violent conflict.⁷⁶ On the tactical level, the Chinese resorted to a multiple approach: sustaining trade and tribute relations; launching punitive raids or full-scale military campaigns into nomadic territory; playing barbarians against barbarians; and constructing defensive walls. A permanent resolution to the nomadic problem appeared difficult, if not impossible, in the era preceding modern methods of communication and transportation. Faced with superior Chinese strength on the frontier, the nomads could always withdraw deep into the steppe where pursuit was limited by logistical considerations.

Throughout the four centuries from the end of the Tang dynasty until the Mongol conquest, the two strategies and the four tactics worked largely because China was shielded from a massive invasion of the steppe nomads by several semi-nomadic states that occupied the region north of the Yellow River. The organization of a powerful Mongol confederacy under Chingghis Khan dramatically changed the strategic balance. The Mongol Yuan dynasty failed in its ambitious effort to fuse the Chinese and steppe cultures. Following their established practice, the Mongols consolidated their power, adopted the culture and imperial structure of the vanquished, but then forfeited the loyalty of the tribal leaders without winning over the Chinese population. In the words of F. W. Mote: “They failed in the steppe pattern of failure.”⁷⁷ After they were overthrown by a domestic rebellion, the region north of the Yellow River reverted to its traditional state as a complex frontier where the new, purely Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the Mongols, and Jürchen (later Manchu) peoples competed for supremacy. Unlike the sites of other state-building projects in Eurasia, ethnic and religious hostility played no role here, in part because the Confucian ethical system had no place for either prejudice.⁷⁸

From the very earliest period of Chinese history, the river civilization to the south of the Yellow River with its intensive agriculture organized in cellular villages was distinct from the arid and semi-arid steppe to the

⁷⁶ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism. Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Ming China* (Princeton University Press, 1995), p. ix. Cf. Peter C. Perdue, “Culture, History and Imperial Chinese Strategy. Legacies of the Qing Conquests,” in Hands van de Ven (ed.), *Warfare in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 252–87.

⁷⁷ F. W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 397.

⁷⁸ Mote, *Imperial China*, p. 559.

north where nomadic cultures predominated. But as Owen Lattimore argued, there was no clear-cut boundary line separating the two cultures. Lattimore's central thesis was that frontiers are formed at the margins of socioeconomic systems defined by their "optimal limit of growth." In stressing the dynamics of frontier exchange in Chinese nomadic relations, he coined the term "frontier feudalism." The key to the system was the shift from a clan to a territorial-based organization of the nomads on the margins. This was the result of a Chinese policy of creating a patron–client relationship with the frontier nomads. Although Lattimore believed that the nomad could always withdraw into the steppe if necessary, his famous aphorism, "the pure nomad is a poor nomad," illustrates the preference for a symbiotic relationship along the frontier.⁷⁹ For Lattimore Manchuria occupied a unique niche on China's frontiers: a reservoir region with an inner-facing frontier. Under the Qing dynasty the population beyond the Great Wall was composed of tribal elements "who remained outside of the conquered territory but were identified with the alien dynasty within the Wall." In periods of alternating barbarian and Chinese ascendancy, Manchuria served as a reservoir of officials and troops. Thus, the indigenous population and the colonists from the south looked back to China rather than forward to settling new territories.⁸⁰ As the key to governing China, it was a prize that, beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Russians and the Japanese fought to seize from China and bring under their control.

Lattimore's thesis stood virtually alone until the 1970s when Western scholars began to move away from an interpretation that emphasized the Western challenge as the main factor in shaping Chinese frontier policy.⁸¹ The revisionists argued that the interaction of the sedentary population with the nomads along an age-old Inner Asian frontier established the precedents for subsequent dealings with the Western maritime powers on China's coastal frontier. The process was guided by bargaining for mutual benefit. Its main features were the regulation of trade and the establishment of a tribute system. Inner Asian imperial policy also displayed a high degree of religious toleration, especially toward Lamaism, introduced

⁷⁹ Owen Lattimore, "Inner Asian Frontiers. Chinese and Russian Margins of Expansion," in *Studies in Frontier History*, pp. 134–45. The quotation is from "The Geographic Factor in Mongol History," *ibid.*, p. 257.

⁸⁰ Owen Lattimore, "Chinese Colonization in Manchuria," in *Studies in Frontier History*, pp. 308–11.

⁸¹ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China. American Historians Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). Cf. Maurice Rossabi, "The Tea and Horse Trade with Inner Asia during the Ming," *Journal of Asian History* 42 (1970): 136–68, and more generally his *China and Inner Asia. From 1368 to the Present Day* (New York: Pika Press, 1975).

different administrative systems for the outer provinces, and promoted various projects of resettlement, some of which involved an element of coercion.⁸² Inspired by the scholarship of Joseph Fletcher, Thomas J. Barfield, and Sechin Jagchid, a richer picture emerged of the interdependence of nomads and agriculturalists along the Inner Asian frontiers.⁸³ From these studies the nomads emerge as more dependent and, hence, more committed than the imperial power to the maintenance of an exchange culture on the frontiers. They clearly preferred trading to raiding. As long as the nomads accepted Chinese cultural superiority and tributary status peace was assured. But stability in the steppe was a chancy thing. Climactic change, the Chinese decision to close or restrict markets, or the breakdown of order “in the fluid and often chaotic frontier zones” could lead to war.⁸⁴

Long experience had also taught the ruling elites in China the importance of preparing for war. Traditionally, their military policy rested on a combination of active and static defenses. Military campaigns supplemented by forced population movements were a recourse of last resort in maintaining control along the Inner Asian frontiers. Such a strategy was costly and, due to logistical problems, incursions into the steppe could not be sustained for long periods. A more static form of defense was the construction of walls. From the earliest times earthen walls served the dual purpose of protecting frontiers against outside attack and facilitating centralization and unification in the core provinces. The building of the Great Wall of China at the end of the sixteenth century signaled the retreat of the Ming dynasty from a policy of active defense of the frontiers against the steppe nomads. The shift foreshadowed its political decline. In 1644, it was no longer able to contain the invasion of the “barbarian” Manchus.

Conquest was the foundation of state-building by the Manchus. After subjugating the core of Ming China, their expansion into Mongolia and

⁸² Peter C. Perdue, “Manchu Colonialism,” *International History Review* 2 (1998): 255–62; Peter C. Perdue, “Empire and Nation in Comparative Perspective. Frontier Administration in Eighteenth Century China,” *Journal of Early Modern History* (2001): 282–304. Perhaps the first to suggest the reciprocal influence of the frontier on Chinese administrative practice was Joseph Fletcher, “Ch’ing Inner Asia c. 1800,” in John K. Fairbank and Dennis Twitchet (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 10: Late Ching, 1800–1911* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 378.

⁸³ Joseph Fletcher, “China and Trans Caspia, 1368–1884,” in John K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order. Traditional China’s Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Joseph Fletcher, “The Mongols. Ecological and Social Perspectives,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6 (1986): 11–50; Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*; Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons, *Peace, War and Trade along the Great Wall. Nomadic–Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁸⁴ Jagchid and Symons, *Peace, War and Trade*, pp. 13–15.

west Turkestan was the first time a ruling dynasty in China had brought these borderlands under control since the Tang in the seventh century CE. Conversion played no role at all; but co-optation of the Mongol and Han elites was vital to their success. Colonization proved to be more problematic.

The Manchus were determined to alter radically the older pattern of frontier policies toward the steppe in order to make certain that men of their origin would never again conquer China. They adopted two strategies to break the cycle of invasion from the steppe. For at least a century after they conquered China, they enforced a strict policy of quarantining their homeland in the northeast against the penetration of cultural and economic influences from the old centers of Chinese power to the south. Their aim was to keep intact the warrior traditions that they believed had given them the edge over the sedentary Han people.⁸⁵ At the same time, they created the Eight Banner system. This was a mixed frontier force of Manchus, Mongols, and Han peoples to defend against subsequent attacks from the steppe. By co-opting military elites, the Qing facilitated their rule over China, enabling them to split and weaken the Mongol tribes who constituted their major rivals for control over the Inner Asian frontier in the early years of the new dynasty.

The Manchus began their domination of Inner Asia by securing control over the Liao River valley, and then consolidated it by occupying the remaining key frontier points in the northwest and northeast.⁸⁶ In Mongolia, which became, in the words of Owen Lattimore, “China’s frontier province par excellence,” the Qing government sought to divide the Mongols along both class and tribal lines, while allowing considerable latitude to the more independent tribes in the region. Mongol political unity had not existed since the heyday of the great steppe empires of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although there had been periodic attempts to restore it.⁸⁷ But in the 1630s and 1640s when the Manchus were forcing the northern frontiers of Ming China, a constellation of west Mongol tribes (Oirat in Russian or Olot in Chinese) succeeded in bringing all the northern part of western Turkestan (Dzhungaria) under their control. At first they denied any intention of restoring the empire of

⁸⁵ Robert H. G. Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier in Ch’ing History* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 8–11, 39–40.

⁸⁶ Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers*, pp. 115–17, 157, 171.

⁸⁷ Owen Lattimore, *Nationalism and Revolution in Mongolia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 6–7, exploded the myth of Mongol “nationalism” based on an illusory image of unity, noting that “they neither adhered to the Manchus as a united people nor resisted the imposition of Manchu authority in the manner of a nation defending itself against foreigners.”



Map 1.2 The Qing Empire at its height, c. 1850

Chingghis Khan. They accepted the decision of the great Mongol congress (*chulgan*) of 1640 to uphold the confederation of tribes, adopt a Mongol code of laws, and avoid internecine warfare in order to present a common front against external enemies. Dzhungaria was not merely a nomadic confederation. It had some of the earmarks of an early modern state. Pastoral and agricultural communities were based on a restored irrigation system. In a few urban centers handicrafts flourished and, thanks to Russian fugitives, guns, cannon, and powder were manufactured. Dzhungaria gradually became a center of attraction for all Mongols. Then in the 1650s and 1660s, a series of succession struggles and tribal rivalries plunged the country into civil war. The emergence of a strong leader, the famous Galdan, precipitated an expansionist policy aimed at unifying the Mongols of Turkestan and north Mongolia (the Khalka tribes). This brought in the Qing.⁸⁸

By this time the Manchus had already subjugated Inner Mongolia. In the 1670s they took advantage of tribal wars in order to take the northern Mongols (Khalkas) under their protection. Confronted by a determined effort by the Oirats to expand their Dzhungarian khanate into a pan-Mongol empire, the Qing sent powerful armies to the northwest where they finally defeated their rivals after 50 years of intermittent fighting. These wars revealed all the complexities of a struggle for western Turkestan between the Manchus and Mongols with the Russians hovering in the wings. The Khalkas shifted back and forth between the Chinese and Oirats, at one point seeking help from the Russians. Characteristic of nomadic tactics, they claimed that their oaths of allegiance, and acceptance of titles and seals from the Qing emperors, did not constitute vassalage but only an alliance, while Qing officials claimed the opposite.⁸⁹ The Qing strategy was to split the Mongol tribes before launching a final assault on Dzhungaria. In the 1690s, the Kangxi emperor took personal charge of the bargaining and intimidation. He finally persuaded the Khalka khans to recognize the sovereignty of the Qing dynasty.⁹⁰

Having secured their flank, the Qing launched a military campaign that by mid-century reached their deepest penetration into Inner

⁸⁸ O. V. Zotov, *Kitai i vostochnyi Turkestan v XV–XVIII vv. Mezhdugosudarstvennye otnosheniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), pp. 102–3, and I. Ia. Zlatkin, *Istoriia Dzhungarskogo Khanstva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), pp. 97–100.

⁸⁹ This has given rise to a prolonged historiographical controversy between Soviet (now Russian) and Chinese historians over whether the Mongol–Chinese relations were that of sovereign and vassal or “intergovernmental.” For a summary of the debate, see Zotov, *Kitai i vostochnyi Turkestan*, especially the historiographical introduction and pp. 116–21 defending the older Soviet tradition in rather more sophisticated terms.

⁹⁰ I. S. Ermachenko, *Politika man'chzhurskoi dinastii Tsin v Iuzhnoi i Severnoi Mongolii v XVII v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), pp. 102–4.

Asia.⁹¹ The Oirats retreated, moving north and west, and bringing Uighurs and Kirghiz under their control. Their expansion represented the last attempts to construct a Mongol empire between Russia and China. It stretched from the lower Irtysh in the north to the borders of Tibet in the south, and from Tashkent, which it occupied in 1723, to western Turkestan. To destroy Dzhungaria, the Qing alternated between the two strategies that had long characterized China's relations with "the barbarians." They traded with the Oirats, but prepared for war by building forts in the steppe and settling military colonists. Throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century, they continued to launch military expeditions into the major oases of Turkestan. In mid-century, the Qing mounted a series of powerful offensives. In 1755–1759, with the help of the Khalka Mongols, the armies of Kangxi destroyed the Dzhungarian khanate and scattered the Oirats throughout Eurasia. The victorious Qing armies then campaigned against the Kazakhs deep into the mountainous Altai region, expanding the frontiers of China to their greatest extent in a thousand years.

The growth of scholarly interest in the western expansion of the Manchus has led to a new conceptualization of the frontier in Inner Asia. The importance of cities in frontier defense was first suggested by G. William Skinner, who argued that cities in the frontier regions of the west were obliged to assume broader military-administrative responsibilities in dealing with their vulnerable and diverse regions.⁹² His analysis of complex macro-regional economies with their cores located in river valley lowlands and centered on major cities not only served as the basis for his cyclical interpretation of Chinese history, but provided a structural framework for delimiting internal frontiers. Urban clusters at the core were surrounded by sparsely populated peripheries.⁹³ The administrative division of China into provinces duplicated some of the core-periphery characteristics of macroeconomic systems. At sites where the peripheries of one macro-region or province met others, the administrative control of the urban cores was weakest and the possibilities for rural protest greater. In the nineteenth century, internal rebellions often began or expanded rapidly at the peripheries where the borders of several

⁹¹ This section is based mainly on Perdue, *China Marches West*, chs. 6 and 7.

⁹² G. William Skinner, "Urban Development in Imperial China," and "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems," in *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford University Press, 1977), pp. 3–31 and 211–49. See also Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond the Great Wall. Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontiers* (Stanford University Press, 1996), who expands this thesis.

⁹³ G. William Skinner, "The Structure of Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 44(2) (February 1985): 271–92.

provinces met.⁹⁴ In the twentieth century after the Long March of the Communists, their most successful organizational activities, the establishment of base areas, were carried out in internal border areas.

Like the other Eurasian empires, the Qing was virtually encircled by frontier shatter zones. The next important stage in the reconceptualization of the Chinese frontier policy came in the 1990s from a group of scholars headed by Pamela Crossley, Evelyn Rawski, and James A. Millward. They insisted that the Qing was an Inner Asian empire rather than a Chinese dynasty. They argued that a Manchu ethnic identity did not diminish, but grew stronger throughout the nineteenth century as the new ruling elite maintained the frontier between their homeland and China. For them Sinicization was based on the mistaken view of the Han people as a homogeneous ethnic group.⁹⁵ Their revisionist view of the frontier in Chinese history has attached new and unprecedented importance to the complex interaction between the core provinces of China and the Inner Asian frontiers.⁹⁶ Reflecting on this work, Peter C. Perdue has drawn a fruitful comparison of the similar effects of the frontier experience on both the Qing and the Ottoman empires, in particular their response to the needs and demands of peoples in the borderlands as opposed to the traditional emphasis on centralization as the basis for state-building.⁹⁷

In analyzing the variety of Chinese frontiers, S. A. M. Adshead has portrayed them as constituting a “vast three-quarters of a circle around the rim of the Chinese heartland of the lower Hung-ho and Yangtse.” In Kansu Chinghai and parts of Xinjiang the frontiers were pastoral; in Kirin, Kwangsei, and Taiwan they were mining frontiers; in Xinjiang and Siking they were military. Agreeing with Lattimore and Skinner, he further notes that these frontiers were turbulent and inward looking: “the mid-century rebellions are best understood as an inversion of the frontier, attempts by

⁹⁴ For suggestive evidence, see Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), pp. 174 (Taiping rebellion), 183 (Nian rebellion), 188 (Muslim rebellion).

⁹⁵ Pamela Kyle Crossley, *The Manchus* (Oxford University Press, 1997); Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror. History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors. A Social History of Qing Institutions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass. Economy, Ethnicity and Empire in Qing Trans Caspia, 1759–1864* (Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁹⁶ Mote, *Imperial China*, pp. 376, 393–97, 405, 457, 559, 605–8, 844–50, 867–69, 874–75; Crossley, *The Manchus*; Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, esp. chs. 1 and 2.

⁹⁷ Peter C. Perdue, “Empire and Nation in Comparative Perspective. Frontier Administration in Eighteenth Century China,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 4 (2001): 283–88, 293. This comparison can also be extended to other Eurasian empires.

the backcountry to conquer the heartlands.”⁹⁸ They were also inhabited by a mix of ethnolinguistic groups penetrated by Han colonization only late in Qing history. These new interpretations have stimulated a debate over the concept of Sinicization.⁹⁹ One attempt to synthesize the divergent points of view on the relationship between the Manchu and the Han has suggested that the policy of co-opting military elites through the banner system gradually led to the reverse effect of facilitating the acculturation of the Manchu into the Chinese way of life.¹⁰⁰ These interpretations help to illuminate how Chinese colonization contributed to the shifting populations of the shatter zones in the Inner Asian borderlands.

In the early period of Qing rule, the central Manchu authorities sought to prevent Han Chinese settlements in their original homeland. Their policy was undermined by a combination of population pressure in north China and the reluctance of local officials to stem the tide of potentially productive and revenue-producing colonists. The government undercut its own policy by sending tens of thousands of exiles into the northeast provinces. By the late nineteenth century, the Manchu had given up their attempt to prevent their tribal lands from being swamped by Chinese (Han). The convict population was swelled by woodsmen, gold miners, ginseng diggers, pearl fishers, brigands, and, finally, illegal peasant settlers. By the early twentieth century the Chinese greatly outnumbered the Manchu.¹⁰¹ A similar change was taking place in Inner Mongolia. In both frontier regions the “New Administration” of the post-Boxer Rebellion era sought to protect the border against foreign, mainly Russian, intervention by developing the economy and opening grazing lands to Chinese settlement.¹⁰²

In Xinjiang, colonization began even before the completion of the conquest. The Qing sought to make the new borderland self-sufficient, to raise a buffer against Kazakh and Russian pressure, and to create a nucleus of loyal Han Chinese to balance the multicultures of the region.

⁹⁸ S. A. M. Adshead, *China in World History*, 3rd edn (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 320–21.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Evelyn S. Rawski, “Presidential Address. Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 55(4) (November 1996): 829–50; Ping-Ti Ho, “In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's ‘Reenvisioning the Qing,’” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57(1) (February 1998): 123–55.

¹⁰⁰ Marc C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way. The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹⁰¹ Lee, *The Manchurian Frontier*, esp. ch. 5.

¹⁰² Mei-hua Lan, “China's ‘New Administration’ in Mongolia,” in Stephen Kotkin and Bruce A. Elleman (eds.), *Mongolia in the Twentieth Century. Landlocked Cosmopolitan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 39–45.

Settlements were concentrated north of the Tianshan Range, where the abundance of arable land and the partial depopulation caused by the prolonged Qing–Dzungar wars created favorable conditions. The Qing garrison forces, including Manchu and Mongols, tribal groups from Mongolia and Manchuria, and regular Han army units, added to the rich ethnic mix of the borderland. In addition to civilian and military colonists, smaller groups of “trouble-makers” and criminals were exiled to Xinjiang, as in Manchuria.¹⁰³ In the south, more heavily populated by organized Turkic Muslim communities, the Qing authorities refrained from actively pursuing colonizing policies until the nineteenth century. In the 1830s, in response to a serious regional revolt, the Qing increased their military presence and initiated a policy of settling military and civilian colonists south of the Tianshan. But they did not seek to Sinicize the region.¹⁰⁴ The government allowed Chinese Muslim merchants from the neighboring provinces of Gansu to set up shop in the oases. But as in Mongolia the local population regarded the Han middlemen as exploiters, leading to internal disturbances.¹⁰⁵ By the end of the century the Qing was encouraging immigration of the Han population and the conversion of pasture land into settled colonies. These were not entirely successful. Sinicization came too late. The integration of the “new frontier” depended on stability and strength at the imperial power center. When in the mid-nineteenth century decline set in, the ties with Xinjiang and the Mongol borderlands frayed to breaking point. Russia was waiting in the wings.

West Eurasia

In west Eurasia, the brief but destructive Mongol impact accelerated the movement of German colonists from west to east. In the twelfth century, the Teutonic Order, initially inspired by the early successes of the Crusades in the Holy Land and then tempted by the opportunities for landed wealth, conquered and colonized the poorly organized and sparsely inhabited territories of the Baltic region. They converted and absorbed the pagan Baltic Prus until they were checked by the Lithuanians.¹⁰⁶ During the

¹⁰³ Joanna Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China. Banishment to Xinjiang (1758–1820)* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 23–29.

¹⁰⁴ L. J. Newby, “The Beggars of Xinjiang: Between Two Worlds,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61(2) (1998): 296.

¹⁰⁵ Fletcher, “Ch’ing Inner Asia,” pp. 36–41, 48, 65; Perdue, *China Marches West*, ch. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Paul W. Knoll, “The Most Unique Crusader State. The Teutonic Order in the Development of the Political Culture of Northeastern Europe during the Middle Ages,” in Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (eds.), *The Germans and the East*

following centuries German settlement (*Ostsiedlung*) in the Slavic lands continued along more pacific lines. However, beginning as early as the mid-nineteenth century, Czech, Polish, and Russian historians reversed the picture, portraying the German colonists as the cutting-edge of an aggressive *deutsche Drang nach Osten*.¹⁰⁷ The character of the ancient frontier between “Teuton and Slav” was actually a more complex process combining conquest and peaceful settlement.¹⁰⁸

It would be a mistake to portray the interaction of Germans and Slavs as one driven by a conscious, unmediated ethnic or proto-national antagonism. The colonization of the east over a period of many centuries was not exclusively “German,” but multinational. It was more often peaceful than warlike, by invitation rather than by right of conquest, followed by integration if not assimilation into the local body politic.¹⁰⁹ It is just as important, however, not to ignore the tension that sprang up between the Germans, who settled mainly in the towns, and the Polish rural population. Moreover, a prolonged political conflict simmered between the east German Marks (Brandenburg and Pomerania) as well as the Teutonic Knights in the Baltikum and the Poles over their frontier. The supreme political propagandist of his day, Frederick II, was one of the first to promote the idea of Prussia’s eastern borders as the line between civilization and barbarism. On the eve of the partitions he posted his scurrilously satirical poem on Poland to Voltaire; the Poles, he quipped, were “the last people in Europe.”¹¹⁰

From the twelfth to the late fourteenth century the medieval rulers of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary invited German colonists as skilled cultivators, mining engineers, and craftsmen. In Poland, the earliest colonists arrived in Silesia according to a regular plan of colonization. It has been

(West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), pp. 37–48; Raisa Mazeika, “An Amicable Enmity. Some Peculiarities in Teutonic–Balt Relations in the Chronicles of the Baltic Crusades,” in Ingrao and Szabo (eds.), *The Germans and the East*, pp. 49–63.

¹⁰⁷ Wolfgang Wipperman, *Der “Deutsche Drang nach Osten.” Ideologie und Wirklichkeit eines politischen Schlagworts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1981); Franz A.J. Szabo and Charles Ingrao, “Introduction,” in Ingrao and Szabo (eds.), *The Germans and the East*, pp. 3–5.

¹⁰⁸ Alexander Demandt (ed.), *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1990); see also essays in Ingrao and Szabo, *The Germans and the East*, especially Jan M. Piskorski, “Medieval Colonization in East Central Europe,” pp. 27–36.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Rady, “The German Settlement in Central and Eastern Europe during the High Middle Ages,” in Roger Bartlett and Karen Schonwalder (eds.), *The German Lands and Eastern Europe. Essays on the History of their Social, Cultural and Political Relations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 11–47; Karin Friedrich, “Cives Patriae: ‘German’ Burgers in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth,” in Bartlett and Schonwalder (eds.), *German Lands and Eastern Europe*, pp. 48–71.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 65–66, 186–89, 307, 335, 340–41.

estimated that approximately 250,000 German settlers arrived in the Polish lands where the indigenous population did not exceed 1.5 million. The contribution of these settlers to the economic and cultural development of Poland became a much disputed subject among German and Polish nationalist historians right down to the Second World War.¹¹¹ The major controversy centered on the importance of the Magdeburg Law, a collection of legal instruments dealing with civil law, public administration, and social relations that evolved from Italian urban codes and was first applied by the German emperor, Otto the Great, in the Saxon and east Elbian province, from whence they were introduced into Poland. The question of whether colonization beyond the Elbe involved mainly foreigners, and how many were Poles who were granted “charter under German law” of Silesia, remains in dispute. In any case, the transfer in the late fourteenth century of Magdeburg Law into the eastern Galician–Russian borderlands after their incorporation into the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was regarded by the Polish rulers as a means of polonization. The local town councils (*rada*) became a battleground between Catholic Poles and Orthodox Russians over religious questions, which led on occasion to the creation of two separate councils.¹¹² Thus, ironically, the transfer of Germanic law created an arena for the long Polish–Russian cultural struggle over the borderlands.

In the medieval period, the interaction of the Germans and Poles combined elements of cooperation and friendship with resentment and even hatred, though little violence. Having escaped the destructive impact of the Mongols, the Polish noble landlords had welcomed a large-scale migration of German, Flemish, and Walloon colonists. They had helped to revitalize agriculture and develop new centers of urban life, sparking what one Polish historian has called the “Thirteenth Century Breakthrough.”¹¹³

By the end of the fourteenth century the borderlands of the Kingdom of Poland formed a personal union with the Lithuanian state to form the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Poles checked the advance of the Teutonic Order (but did not expel the German knights from the Baltic). They penetrated deeply into the forests of what is today Belarus

¹¹¹ Paul Knoll, “The Polish–German Frontier,” in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds.), *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 159–62.

¹¹² N. Vasilenko, “Pravo Magdeburgskoe,” in F. A. Brokgaus and I. A. Efron (eds.), *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg: I. A. Efron, 1898), vol. XXXVIII, pp. 893–96.

¹¹³ Benedykt Zientara, “Melioratio terrae: The Thirteenth Century Breakthrough in Polish History,” in J. K. Fedorowicz (ed.), *A Republic of Nobles. Studies in Polish History to 1864* (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 34–35.

and advanced toward the southwest into the Pontic steppe. They brought under their control the Orthodox population of the ancient Russian principalities in Galicia. They incorporated the right bank of the Dnieper, including Kiev “the mother of Russian cities.” The Russians living under Mongol authority considered these territories as a lost part of their patrimony. By the late sixteenth century the Polish nobles and the Catholic Church were competing with the Muslim Ottomans to the south and the Orthodox Russians to the northeast for political and cultural hegemony over the entire Pontic steppe. During the succeeding 200 years, these territories would become a vast shatter zone where a multi-sided struggle raged among Poles, Russians, Crimean Tatars, and the Cossack brotherhoods. The lines of demarcation would be drawn and redrawn; key strategic points would be won and lost; colonization, resettlement, and deportation of the increasingly mixed population would continue into the mid-twentieth century.

In Hungary, even before the devastation of the Mongol invasion, German peasants from the Rhineland (called Saxons by the Hungarians) settled in Transylvania and the northern Hungarian plain. German miners came in to work the silver and copper mines of Transylvania and the Carpathians. In Transylvania they became the third *natio*, with a fixed territory and enjoying civic rights which they defended repeatedly in the following centuries. In the early thirteenth century, Germans were settled in the royal manors of the north and granted privileges in order to help to re-populate the land after the Mongol devastation. South German traders and entrepreneurs began to dominate external trade and competed with Italians and Hungarians. For several centuries thereafter, Buda and most of the towns in the Hungarian plain were “dominated by powerful German elements.”¹¹⁴ However, the Germans did not develop a strong separatist, still less a nationalist, movement in Hungary. Nor were they encouraged to do so by Count Metternich despite his concern over the rise of Magyar nationalism in the post-Napoleonic period. Nationalism of any sort was abhorrent to him. Still, the Germans in Budapest sought to bridge the gap between the two cultures by portraying themselves as German-speaking Hungarian patriots. But in 1848 a *Deutschmagyar* identity was not acceptable in the eyes of Hungarian revolutionaries. In the wake of the repression of the revolution, Vienna re-imposed German as the language of administration. The attempt to keep alive an imperial language steadily waned in the face

¹¹⁴ Martyn C. Rady, *Medieval Buda. A Study of Municipal Government and Jurisdiction in the Kingdom of Hungary* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1985), pp. 106–7, 162–64.

of strong Hungarian opposition, although German remained a second language in the capital down to the end of the Second World War.¹¹⁵

In Bohemia, as in Poland and Hungary, German colonists had begun in the twelfth century and increasingly in the thirteenth century to migrate into the frontier zones (*Rand-Gebieten*) of Bohemia. Early contacts between Czechs and Germans promised a fusion, or at least a symbiotic relationship. But the socioeconomic tensions turned into a cultural and then a destructive armed conflict when the Hussite reform movement in the church turned against the German clergy and townsmen. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Czech and German nationalist historians lined up on opposite sides over responsibilities and consequences of the Hussite wars. But the tendency of the historiography of the 1930s to cast these tensions in nationalist terms seems now to be anachronistic. A fresh wave of German immigrants at the end of the fifteenth century settled in the depopulated villages, and relations with the Czechs briefly improved as the Germans became Protestants. But a conflict broke out in 1618, when a Czech and German Protestant oligarchy refused to accept the election of an absolutist, religiously intolerant Habsburg candidate to the throne. Their defeat and the confiscation of their estates enabled the Emperor Ferdinand to grant new patents of nobility and to bring in more German colonists from Austria, Bavaria, and Swabia. However, the process of integration of the newcomers with the local nobility who had remained loyal to the Monarchy appears to have continued peaceably.¹¹⁶ The German-speaking population gradually expanded during the rest of the seventeenth century all along the peripheral lands, setting the language frontier for the next 200 years.¹¹⁷

In the west Balkans and Danubian frontier, German colonization was an instrument of Habsburg imperial frontier policy aimed at checking the expansion of the Ottomans. The Military Frontier (*Militärgrenze*) was first established by Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand I in 1521 as a buffer against Islam. It gradually acquired new features. The government in Vienna promoted colonization, established a quarantine against the spread of disease, and erected an economic barrier to protect trade against

¹¹⁵ Robert Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest* (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005), pp. 71–76, 177–78.

¹¹⁶ Tomáš Knoz, “Die Konfiskationen nach 1620 in (erb)länderübergreifender Perspektive. Thesen zu Wirkungen, Aspekten und Prinzipien des Konfiskationsprozesses,” in Petr Mat’ a and Thomas Winkelbauer (eds.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1620 bis 1740* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2006), esp. pp. 112–14 and 124–26.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Czechs and Germans. A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia* (Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 4–10.

Ottoman competition.¹¹⁸ It took advantage of the opportunities offered by the Great Serbian Migration of 1691 to colonize the Military Frontier with loyal settlers. It granted extensive privileges to the Rascians, as the Serbs were then called after the medieval Serbian Kingdom of Raska, exempted them from manorial dues, and, most importantly, placed them under the direct authority of the Hofkammer or local Austrian military authorities. After the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, Vienna extended the Military Frontier from the Triplex Confinium east to the new borders in Slavonia and along the Theiss (Tisza) and Marosch (Mureš) rivers. The soldiers, mainly Serbs, who had served there during the war received tax-free farm plots as frontier colonists. Their dual function was to protect the border against the Turks, on the one hand, and hem in the Hungarians, on the other hand. In the early eighteenth century friction developed between the Austrian frontier officials, the Hungarian chancellor, and the Serbs over questions of jurisdiction and taxes. The Austrians attempted to separate the civil (tax-paying) and military (tax-exempt) elements among the Serbs – like similar attempts by Poles and Russians to regulate and control the Cossacks – with similar results. Disillusioned, large numbers of demobilized Serbs left for Russia. A few decades later the remnants of the Zaporozhian Cossacks reacted in a similar way to the final abolition of their autonomy by leaving Russia to seek refuge and accept Habsburg service on the Military Frontier.¹¹⁹

The most ambitious Habsburg colonization project followed their last great military conquest at the juncture of the Triplex and the Danubian frontier. By the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 the Habsburgs acquired the left bank of the Danube, the Banat of Temesvár, West or Little Wallachia, and the great prize of Belgrade, which the Ottomans called “the Lock.” This was the high watermark of Habsburg success in bringing the west Balkan and Danubian borderlands under their control. The centerpiece of the new policy was the attempt to make Belgrade a German city. A law of 1720 decreed that all the inhabitants of the newly liberated city must be German by ethnic origin and Roman Catholic in religion. The Serb and Orthodox inhabitants were rounded up and resettled outside the city limits. The German residents were allowed to elect their own municipal officials, levy taxes, and set their cultural imprimatur on the city. The reconstruction of its fortifications turned the city into a frontier bastion of

¹¹⁸ William O'Reilly, “The Historiography of the Military Frontier, 1521–1881,” in Ellis and Esser, *Frontiers*, pp. 229–44.

¹¹⁹ Wynar Lubomyr (ed. and intro.), *Habsburgs and Zaporozhian Cossacks. The Diary of Erich Lassota von Steblau, 1594* (Littleton, CT: Ukrainian Historical Association, 1975), pp. 41–46; Volodimir Mil'chev, *Zaporozhtsi na Vuis'komu Kordoni Avstriis'koi imperii, 1785–1790 (dosidzhennia ta materialy)* (Zaporozhe: Tandem-U, 2007).

Habsburg defense against the Turks.¹²⁰ After much hesitation and despite the great difficulties involved, the government decided on an extremely complicated frontier policy designed to keep the Hungarians in check, satisfy the Serbs, and defend against an Ottoman reconquest. There were two keys to the double doors facing south against the Ottomans and north against the Hungarians. The first opened the way to a colonization of the Banat under imperial rule; the second locked in place the old Theiss–Marosch frontier institutions.¹²¹

In order to integrate the Banat into the imperial system Vienna sought to combine the old frontier strategy of settling Serbian military colonists along the new Ottoman border with a new approach. Under the enlightened stewardship of General Claudio Florimond Mersia a policy of economic development was launched. His aim was to shift the semi-nomadic, stock-rearing economy to intensive cultivation by promoting land reclamation and planned immigration. A scheme to attract peasants and craftsmen from as far away as the Rhineland brought in about 15,000 German colonists by the 1720s. Others followed, including Bulgarians, Armenians, and in the 1740s, for the first time, the Hungarians. Their new villages were named after members of the royal dynasty as integrating symbols of imperial rule. Between 1748 and 1753 another wave of Germans settled in the region. A Colonization Patent in 1763 and the creation of a Colonization Commission in 1766 consolidated a state system of privileges and financial support for colonists, not only Germans but also foreigners from Western Europe. Only Hungarians were excluded.¹²² Soon afterwards, a mass immigration of Romanians escaping Ottoman repression in the neighboring Orsova district stirred the ethnic mix once again. By 1780, the Romanians constituted more than half the population of the Banat.¹²³

The liberation of Belgrade and the Banat had brought the majority of Serbs under the imperial flag. Twenty years later a revitalized Ottoman

¹²⁰ Karl A. Roeder, *The Reluctant Ally. Austria's Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737–1739* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), pp. 6–7, based on Theodore von Stefanovic-Volovsky, *Belgrad unter der Regierung Kaiser Karls VI, 1717–1739* (Vienna: Holzhausen, 1908), pp. 23–30.

¹²¹ The maintenance of the Theiss–Marosch frontier was bitterly resented by the Hungarians and caused the Imperial authorities endless problems with the Serbian Grenzers until Maria Theresa finally abolished it as a concession to the Hungarians during the War of the Austrian Succession. Kurt Wesseley, “The Development of the Hungarian Military Frontier until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 9/10 (1973/4): 70–80, 100–1.

¹²² Iu. V. Kostiashev, *Serby v avstriiskoi monarkhii v XVIII veke* (Kaliningrad: Kaliningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1997), pp. 26–36.

¹²³ Thomas Cohen, “The Anatomy of a Colonization Frontier in the Banat of Temesvar,” *Austrian History Yearbook* 19/20(2) (1983/4): 10–11; Wesseley, “The Development,”

Empire drove them back north of the Sava and reoccupied Belgrade, touching off another mass Serbian migration into the Habsburg Empire. The migratory flow continued throughout the eighteenth century. The prospect of an overwhelmingly preponderant Serbian population along the Ottoman frontier aroused concern among the Habsburg leadership. The imperial authorities wavered between placating the Hungarians and supporting the Serbians. Under Maria Theresa, from 1741 to 1749, the Theiss–Marosch military frontier was gradually abolished in the face of bitter Serbian resistance; the lands passed under Hungarian administration. About 3,000 Serbs then emigrated to Russia. Maria Theresa's infringement on the autonomy of the Serbian Orthodox Church also antagonized her Serbian subjects. But they celebrated Joseph II's decision to postpone the transfer of the Banat to Hungarian administration and the promulgation of his Toleration Patent. Their hopes for a grant of a unified territorial autonomy were dashed after Joseph II's death when the Hungarian county system was extended throughout most of the Banat. With the expiration of many of the colonists' economic privileges, the Hungarian magnates were able to impose a seigniorial system on the land.¹²⁴ Once again numbers of Serbian Grenzers and colonists reacted by migrating to Russia. The failure of the policies of colonization to achieve complete assimilation on the frontier was one of the main reasons that the Austrian "mission in the East" lapsed into an ambiguous state.

In the eighteenth century the enlightened rulers of the Habsburg and Russian empires sponsored another wave of German immigration, by the end of which there were islands of German-speaking settlers in the Baltic, Volynia, Transylvania, the Danube Basin, Dobrudja, Bessarabia, the Habsburg Military Frontier, Voevodina, and the central Volga. The consequences of their dispersed pattern of colonization haunted the Germans for another hundred years. Throughout the nineteenth century, the question of how to encompass *Deushtom* emerged as a persistent theme in a set of larger concerns of Germans who were seeking to define their cultural identity and construct a unified state. Was the goal to create an ethnically homogeneous national state on the French (Jacobin) model or to bring as many Germans as possible under one flag? It became clear at the Frankfurt Assembly in 1848, when the debate over unification of the Germans had its first airing, that neither alternative was ideal. However,

pp. 95–98, but see also the most comprehensive treatment in N. L. Gačesa, *Agrarna reforma i kolonizacija u Bačkoj, 1918–1941* (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, Odeljanye za društvene nauke, 1968), pp. 7–28.

¹²⁴ Ernest Schimsche, *Technik und Methoden der Theresianischen Besiedlung des Banats* (Baden bei Wien: Rohrer, 1939); Sonja Jordan, *Die Kaiserliche Wirtschaftspolitik im Banat in 18. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1967); Karl A. Roeder, *Austria's Eastern Question, 1700–1790* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

throughout much of 1848, a majority, including not only democrats and Catholics but liberals as well, favored the incorporation of the German-speaking Habsburg lands into a greater Reich. They were inspired by great power ambitions and fear of the Slavs. As one speaker put it: “Only when we have Austria which is now educating the Slavs through its free constitution and which draws them to German freedom and education will we neutralize the dangers which pan-Slavism threatens us.”¹²⁵ The most widely cited text among the nationalists in 1848 was the German poet Arndt’s lied, *Das Deutsch Vaterland*, written in 1813 at the height of the German War of Liberation against Napoleon. Each stanza expanded German territory from Preussenland to Austria with a coda that the fatherland should extend “As far as the German tongue is spoken.”¹²⁶ A *kleindeutsch* solution would leave too many Germans outside the nation-state and the *grossdeutsch* solution would bring too many non-Germans, Poles, and Danes, perhaps Czechs as well, into what would become a multinational empire. The Bismarckian compromise fell somewhere between these two solutions.¹²⁷

The Russian Empire

The migration of the east Slavic tribes, like the Germanic *Völkerwanderung*, began very early in the history of Eurasia around the fifth and sixth centuries, moving in three directions, to the north, south, and east. Natural obstacles such as swamps and thick forests broke up the land of west Eurasia into different ecological niches, which meant that the colonizing process was not carried out by large masses of the population, but in a dispersed manner. Slavic tribes migrating out of the region watered by the upper reaches of the western Dvina, Dniester, and Dnieper merged peacefully with the Finnish tribes in the northern forests. To the south, the advance took place behind the “shield” provided by the Khazar khanate on the steppe. When that shield collapsed under the pressure of the nomadic Polovtsy and the Arab-Islamic expansion, the settlers were forced back into the forest margins of the steppe, though hardy hunters and fishers strayed south along the rivers, the forerunners of the Cossacks. A pattern

¹²⁵ Günter Wollstein, “Das Grossdeutschland” der Paulskirche Nationale Zielein der bürgerlichen Revolution, 1848–49 (Dusseldorf: Droste, 1977), pp. 266–335, quotation on p. 304.

¹²⁶ Mack Hewitson, *Nationalism in Germany, 1848–1866* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 60.

¹²⁷ For a convincing argument that the Second Reich was in fact an empire, see Philip Ther, “Imperial instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires,” in Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds.), *Imperial Rule* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), pp. 47–68.

had been established of advance and retreat reflecting the fluctuations of steppe politics. Settlers fleeing the Mongols migrated into the heavily forested area to the north or into the foothills of the Carpathians where the principalities of Galicia and Volynia took shape; this was the origin of a distinctive branch of the Slavic language and ethnicity subsequently called Little Russian and then Ukrainian. But the Russians did not disappear from the margins of the steppe.¹²⁸

Extensive cultivation of the land and the desire to escape the obligations of serfdom spurred peasant colonization. The ruling elite took an ambivalent attitude toward these population movements. On the one hand, the landowners in the core provinces of Muscovy sought to stem the flight of peasant migrants seeking to escape from the heavy burdens of taxation. On the other hand, servicemen on the frontier were eager to increase the labor force on their estates. The tug of war was legally resolved when the Law Code (*Ulozhenie*) of 1649 imposed serfdom on a peasantry that was already economically bound to the landlord. But the drain of manpower from the center continued. In the long run government policy contributed to the success of the peasants in consolidating Russian control over the Pontic steppe and south Caucasus. In contrast to the Ottoman and Iranian treatment of the nomads, Moscow confiscated much of their pasture and distributed it to servicemen, who were then able to settle peasant migrant agriculturalists on the rich Black Earth lands of the Pontic frontier.¹²⁹

There was always an unresolved set of tensions in the migration of the Russians between state-sponsored colonization and spontaneous movement of people, between the colonists and the indigenous people, between the nomadic and settled concepts of sovereignty and property. But there were two shared and distinctive features of Russian colonization. First, the terms colonization (*kolonizatsiia*) and resettlement (*pereselenie*) were linked in Russian usage and reflected a social reality, namely, that they were virtually indistinguishable from one another. Russians migrated internally, while west Europeans settled overseas.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ A. Ia. Degtiarev, Iu. F. Ivanov, and D. V. Karev, "Akademik M. K. Liubavskii i ego nasledie," in M. K. Liubavskii (ed.), *Obzor istorii russkoi kolonizatsii s drevneishikh vremen i do XX veka* (Moscow: Izd. Moskovskogo universiteta, 1996), pp. 42–43. This fundamental work was written in the early 1930s, but never published during the Soviet period.

¹²⁹ David Moon, "Peasant Migration and the Settlement of Russia's Frontiers, 1550–1897," *Historical Journal* 40(4) (December 1997): 883–84.

¹³⁰ Willard Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question.' Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000): 22–31; Boris Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia Rossii period imperii (XVII–nachalo XX v.) Genезis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi semi, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999), vol. I, p. 23, demonstrates the uneven and regional distribution of colonization.

Second, Russian colonization proceeded in irregular spurts over time and concentrated on certain frontiers, producing an uneven distribution of Russians and Ukrainian migrants throughout the empire. Third, colonization provided the empire with a flexible framework which held up under the pressure of internal rebellions and external wars to the end of the Soviet period. But it was never sufficient to swamp the indigenous people by sheer numbers. This helps to explain why the government failed in its sporadic efforts to integrate the non-Russians into an imperial order. In the long run, the tensions between the colonists and the indigenous peoples created problems of internal stability and external security that placed a heavy strain on the resources of the state whatever its constitutional form.¹³¹

The Russian migration into Siberia began in the twelfth century, when fur traders from the merchant city of Novgorod followed the Kama River and its tributaries and then crossed “the Rock” that is the Ural Mountains. After the Mongols had crushed the Russian principalities to the south, the Novgorod merchants expanded their northern colonies, raiding as far as the Volga. The conquest of the vast forest zone of Siberia took another century. The Moscow principality gradually emerged as the chief commercial rival of Novgorod in the fur trade, employing missionaries to convert the indigenous tribes and consolidate their interests. By the end of the fifteenth century, Moscow had succeeded in gathering the Russian lands clustered around the headwaters of the Volga, Dnieper, and western Dvina rivers, and had broken the power of Novgorod. Moscow incorporated Novgorod’s colonies, including the vast province of Viatka, the gateway to Siberia. But colonization was hampered by the severe climate

Number of colonists settling in regions in thousands

Region	1678–1740	1740–1782	1782–1858	1870–1896	1897–1915	Total
Center	260	370	–			630
Siberia	90	–	517	926	3,520	5,053
New Russia	–	135	1,510	1,045	333	3,023
Volga–Ural	–	270	968	358	80	1,676
North	–	–	565	1,687	296	2,448
Caucasus						
Total	350	775	3,560	4,016	4,229	12,830

¹³¹ “Russian Colonization. An Introduction,” in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, and Willard Sunderland (eds.), *Peopling the Russian Periphery. Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1–18.

and the need to import grain from Moscow. Relations with the indigenous tribes revolved around cycles of trade and raid that characterized similar relations between the semi-nomadic or nomadic and sedentary populations of the Eurasian periphery.¹³²

Over the following century small bands of Cossacks and trappers pushed deeper into Siberia, gradually bringing that immense area under the nominal sovereignty of Muscovy. Furs fueled the engine of Russian expansion into eastern Siberia, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the income of Muscovy in the mid-seventeenth century. The Russians employed different methods of obtaining furs, extracting tribute (*iasak*) from the Siberian tribes and Russian merchant entrepreneurs (*promyshlenniks*), and purchasing in a controlled market. That private entrepreneurs were equally involved with state servitors in the race for profits eased their initial contacts with representatives of the Qing Empire in establishing commercial relations.¹³³

The Orthodox Church continued to play an important role in expansion. Kiprian, the first archbishop of the new eparchy of Tobolsk in western Siberia, developed a myth of Siberian conquest. A dynamic figure, this former monk from Novgorod who had supported Moscow against the Swedes in the Time of Troubles, embarked on a program of conversion, land acquisition, construction of monasteries, and improvement of the material life of the Cossack frontiersmen. Intent on endowing his eparchy with a spiritual distinction to match those of the settled lands, he used a local Cossack chronicle to cast an aureole of martyrdom around the dead Cossacks of Ermak's Siberian expedition of the 1590s, stopping just short of canonizing them.

In Siberia the state did not always side with the Russian settlers in ethnic conflicts; there was much competitive bargaining between the Russians and nomads for support by government officials.¹³⁴ From the earliest conquests the interests of the government and the private traders clashed. Muscovite officials were cautious in preparing their expansion and sought to take the indigenous tribes under their protection in return for the tribute. The traders were less scrupulous. Muscovite servicemen followed in the footsteps of the traders, competing and often clashing with them

¹³² S. V. Bakhrushin, *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri v XVI i XVII vv.* (Moscow: M. & S. Sabashnikov, 1928).

¹³³ Raymond H. Fisher, *The Russian Fur Trade, 1550–1700* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1943); Richard Pierce, *Siberia in the Seventeenth Century. A Study in Colonial Administration* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1943).

¹³⁴ Willard Sunderland, "Peasants on the Move. State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805–1830s," *Russian Review* 52 (1993): 472–84.

and one another in the style of Spanish conquistadores. The forts (*ostrogs*) and fortified lines facing south were the fore posts of advance from the forest zone into the Siberian steppe. Colonization was slow and the number of settlers was small.¹³⁵

The law of 1822, drafted by Mikhail Speranskii, aimed at regulating colonization in Siberia and limiting it to authorized groups of state peasants. But the legislation touched off a mass exodus, which in Orenburg Province “reduced the local officials to impotence.” The government was concerned about possible clashes between unregulated migrants and the Kirghiz nomads. But it was never able to exercise complete control over the flow. After the emancipation of the serfs and the expiration of the twenty-year temporary obligation period, new legislation in the 1880s and 1890s opened Siberia to large-scale migration. By 1914, the population had increased to 10 percent of the total and it was almost exclusively Russian and Ukrainian.¹³⁶

Four geocultural factors help to explain why the Russians and not the Chinese or Turkmens conquered Siberia. The Russians of the forest zone had direct access to the Siberian taiga and did not first have to subdue powerful nomadic confederations on the steppe; the elaborate longitudinal river system provided a safer alternative mode of transportation than movement across the steppe, enabling small bands rather than large military expeditions to penetrate the taiga; the social organization and economic activity of the Russians was more favorable to settlement in the forest zone and the margins of the steppe where peasants practiced a combination of cattle raising and agriculture with its slash and burn techniques that encouraged a forward-moving colonization, while Cossacks and freebooters operated independently over great distances without state control and guidance; yet the whole enterprise was backed up by a centralized state that gradually asserted its control.

In comparing the different Siberian and southern frontiers of Russian expansion, Michael Khodarkovsky demonstrates that the conquest of the southern steppe was more gradual, slower, and more costly, accomplished against greater resistance by the nomads, consolidated mainly by military

¹³⁵ Bakhrushin, *Ocherki*; George Lantzeff and Richard A. Pierce, *Eastward to Empire. Exploration and Conquest in the Russian Open Frontier to 1750* (Montreal: McGill and Queens University Press, 1973); Valerie Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom. The Land and its Meanings in Seventeenth Century Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Anatolii Remnev, “Rossiiskaia vlast’ v Sibir i na dal’nom vostoke,” in *Imperium inter pares: Rol’ transferov v istorii Rossiiskoi imperii (1700–1917)* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010), pp. 150–81.

¹³⁶ François-Xavier Coquin, *La Sibérie. Peuplement et immigration paysanne en XIXe siècle* (Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 1969), p. 77.

means, yet more systematic, persistent, and successful than that of the Ottoman or Iranian empires because of the particular process of on-going colonization. Different characteristics also marked the statist western boundaries with Poland–Lithuania, which were demarcated, negotiated, and confirmed in written treaties and *de facto* frontier pacts with the nomads in the south and east where there were “few common references and fixed definitions.”¹³⁷

The breakthrough to the south was made possible by the conquest of the khanate of Kazan by Ivan IV in 1555. Russian military servitors colonized the city and the neighboring lands. Attracted by the rich soil and fisheries on both banks of the Volga, servicemen and boiars with their peasants moved ever southward under the protection of government-built forts and walls.¹³⁸ In Astrakhan, colonization proceeded more slowly because of its exposure to nomadic raids. Farther west, the advance across the steppe to the mouth of the Dnieper was a more prolonged process that was not completed until the reign of Catherine the Great at the end of the eighteenth century. The three-way competition was complicated by the presence of powerful nomadic federations in the steppe, first the Nogai and then in the 1630s the even more formidable Kalmyks. The Muscovites employed a variety of tactics to manage the Nogai, none of them particularly successful. They offered payments and presents; they manipulated factions within the Horde; they demanded hostages and oaths of allegiance; they played the role of intermediary between the Nogai and the more warlike Kalmyks. But well into the seventeenth century the one thing the Russian government would not do was to assume responsibility for protecting the Nogai Hordes against other nomads migrating from the east. The Nogai themselves were astute steppe politicians, accepting presents from both the Poles and the Russians, allying themselves first with one then another of its neighbors, Muscovy, the Commonwealth, and the Crimean Tatars. But they were increasingly unable to defend themselves against the superior firepower of their enemies to the west or the attacks of Kalmyk horsemen to the east. Pressed from all directions, they suffered the fate of many steppe people. In the 1630s the tribal confederation broke up. The remnants drifted westward into the Bujak (Bessarabia) along the Ottoman–Polish frontier. They were replaced on the Pontic steppe by the Kalmyks, with whom the

¹³⁷ Michael Khodarkovsky, “From Frontier to Empire. The Concept of the Frontier in Russia, Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries,” *Russian History* 1–4 (1992): 115–28; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier. The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

¹³⁸ Liubavskii, *Obzor istorii*, pp. 547–50.

Russians were forced to deal on a similar basis for the following century and a half.¹³⁹

In their new location the Nogai continued to be a turbulent element on the frontier. Converts to Islam, they like their Tatar neighbors and allies in the Crimea kept alive the *gazi* frontier tradition of permanent raiding into Christian lands. They ignored the provisions of the Treaty of Karlowitz that had established for the first time a permanent boundary between the Ottoman Empire and the Christian powers. They rebelled against Ottoman sovereignty, and in 1702 entered into an alliance with the Crimean Tatars to abrogate the treaties and keep alive the *gazi* tradition. The sultan disavowed the rebels and forced their compliance. But the frontier was not so easily tamed. In Istanbul, military and religious sympathizers with the old frontier tradition overthrew the sultan, accusing him of betraying the faith and the state.¹⁴⁰ The incident illustrates once again that the struggle over the borderlands could not always be settled by the imperial powers imposing their will on the indigenous populations.

In the Pontic steppe, as elsewhere on the Russian frontiers, colonization was both state-directed and spontaneous. The government's most innovative step was taken in 1752 when Empress Elizabeth endorsed the idea of a Serbian captain in Russian service of establishing military colonies on the Polish–Russian frontier. Based on the model of the Habsburg Military Frontier, the territories of New Serbia and Slavanovo-Serbia were settled by Serbian colonists who enjoyed special privileges in Russia's service. Later St. Petersburg also welcomed Bulgarians and Wallachians fleeing Ottoman rule. Occupying space between the hetmanate, Zaporozhian, and Don Cossacks, the colonists effectively separated the three fractious polities. In their relations with the Crimean Tatars, they rapidly assumed the role of a frontier people; in peacetime, they engaged in trade; in wartime, they served as the avant-garde of the Russian army.

Colonization of the Dnieper–Dniester steppe proceeded less systematically and more spontaneously. Colonists filtering in from Poland and the hetmanate settled in the villages created by the Serbs rather than on separate plots set aside for them. Once the Zaporozhian Cossacks had

¹³⁹ Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met. The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600–1771* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 8–11 and throughout. The subsequent history of the Nogai further illustrates their complex and prolonged struggle to survive. The repeated attempts of the Imperial Russian government to turn them into agriculturists failed. In three waves of migration in the nineteenth century they left Russia for the Ottoman Empire. N. V. "Nagai," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg, 1897), vol. XXXIX, pp. 421–22.

¹⁴⁰ Abou-el-Haj, "Formal Closure," pp. 474–75.

been re-admitted to Russian territory, they launched a three-pronged colonization drive toward Azov and the southeast along the Dnieper tributaries and east into Slobodskaiia Ukraine, which created problems with their neighbors. During the rest of the eighteenth century, colonization followed an irregular course as Russia expanded its control over the entire Pontic frontier. In the Bug–Dniester area, for example, colonists ignored the best-laid plans of the governor and settled where they pleased, wandering a great deal from place to place.¹⁴¹

The systematic colonization of the Pontic steppe proceeded rapidly under Catherine II, with the energetic leadership of two of her favorites, Grigorii Orlov and Prince Grigorii Potemkin, and inspired by the Enlightenment belief in a vigorous population policy. Catherine was the first Russian ruler who planned to use colonization not just to occupy land, but to create model communities in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Equating power and wealth with territorial expansion and population growth, she imported foreigners to instruct the Russian peasant by example in the virtues of social self-discipline and modern agricultural techniques. Thus, plans for colonization were integrated with administrative and social reforms. A large influx of foreigners, lured by free land and privileges, settled along the Volga and in New Russia along the southern frontier between the Bug and Dniester. Russian nobles were granted large estates and peasants were promised personal freedom; runaway serfs were offered amnesty. When the Crimea was annexed in 1783, landowners and officials rushed in as the majority of the Muslim Tatar population departed for the Ottoman Empire. Potemkin once again attracted a variety of colonists, mainly state peasants, ex-soldiers, and Old Believers.¹⁴²

Almost half a million people moved to the steppe during Catherine's reign in what was increasingly a much more highly organized campaign of resettlement of "empty lands" based on the concept of "utility," that is, usefulness to the state and the colonists.¹⁴³ With the strategic aim of rapidly consolidating the new territories, Catherine promoted policies that created a new social structure of land-holding peasants who were

¹⁴¹ Boris Nolde, *La formation de l'empire russe. Études, notes et documents*, 2 vols. (Paris: Institut des études slaves, 1952), vol. I, p. 230.

¹⁴² Roger Bartlett, *Human Capital. The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762–1804* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 81 ff, 126 ff; Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 361–66; Marc Raeff, "The Style of Russia's Imperial Policy and Prince G. A. Potemkin," in Gerald N. Grob (ed.), *Statesmen and Statecraft of the Modern West. Essays in Honor of Dwight E. Lee and H. Donaldson Jordan* (Barre, MA: Barre Publishing, 1967), pp. 1–51.

¹⁴³ Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field. Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), ch. 2.

different in fundamental ways from those of the central provinces.¹⁴⁴ Colonization led to an ecological transformation of the steppe. Cultivation of the rich black earth ploughed up the virgin grasslands that had supported the great nomadic flocks. This meant greater social stability. In the long run these social characteristics strengthened the regional distinctiveness that contributed to the rise of Ukrainian separatism in the twentieth century. In the short run, colonization continued to be a disorderly and confusing process, despite the best efforts of the government bureaucracy to control and direct the movement of peoples into the steppe.¹⁴⁵

During the early stages of the Russian–Ottoman War of 1806–1812, illegal settlers in larger numbers began to filter into the lands between the Dniester and Pruth, even before the Russian army had driven out the Ottomans. After the annexation of Bessarabia in 1815, the Russian government faced a familiar dilemma and resolved it in a familiar way. They discouraged but did not block migration. About 9,000 Romanians crossed into the province, offsetting the flight of local peasants going the other way in order to escape the heavy exactions of the boiar landlords. Meanwhile, an even larger number of Bulgarians crossed the frontier, seeking refuge from Ottoman rule with the encouragement of Alexander I who granted them extensive privileges. The boiars resented and opposed this policy, but the Bulgarian colonists prevailed. By the time of the Crimean War, the number of immigrants totaled 75,000, contributing to what was rapidly becoming another vast shatter zone.¹⁴⁶

In the north Caucasus peasant colonists from the center played a relatively minor role in comparison with the Cossacks and the army. As early as 1711/12, Peter the Great had ordered the colonization of the frontier with the Ottomans and Crimean Tatars by settling Cossacks on the left bank of the Terek. Throughout the eighteenth century they were periodically reinforced with additional Cossack colonists who, under Catherine II, began the construction of fortresses and the Caucasus military line. Throughout the nineteenth century about 100,000 Little Russian Cossacks were settled on the lands of the Black Sea Cossacks. Peasant colonization followed, briefly accelerating after the Treaty of

¹⁴⁴ Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field*, p. 365; de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine*, pp. 363–67; Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 172, 216–17.

¹⁴⁵ Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 131–34.

¹⁴⁶ George F. Jewsbury, *The Russian Annexation of Bessarabia, 1774–1828* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1976), pp. 66–73; Detlef Brandes, *Von den Zaren adoptiert. Die deutschen Kolonisten und die Balkansiedler in Neurussland und Bessarabien 1751–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1993), pp. 114–20, 129–33.

Kuchuk Kainardji, but Catherine's plans to duplicate the pattern of New Russia were disrupted by clashes with the mountaineers and ended in failure.¹⁴⁷

In Trans Caspia, the late colonization policy of the central government was riddled with inconsistencies.¹⁴⁸ Russian peasants began to arrive in the steppe in the 1860s despite government opposition. They were forced to rent lands from the Cossacks. Up to 1899, St. Petersburg repeatedly changed its policy toward peasant settlements as it kept shifting the steppe region from one administrative authority to another. In the Syr Daria region there was no Cossack colonization. Peasant colonists had to contend with the official governmental protection of the Kirghiz grazing lands. In Turkestan, colonization was associated with irrigation involving the settlement of both native and Russian workers on the new lands. After the famine of 1891, a large peasant migration into Turkestan brought sectarians and Mennonites into the Hunger Steppe looking for work on irrigation. But these projects were badly planned and failed. Overall the process of colonization was characterized by a lack of organization and proper arrangements for transportation or building materials for new homes. The influx of poor peasants created fresh problems for the administration. The majority crowded into Tashkent, where local officials blamed their lack of basic sanitary procedures for the cholera epidemic in 1892. In 1897, Governor General A. B. Vrevskii banned all colonization. But Minister of War A. N. Kuropatkin persuaded the tsar to undertake construction of a direct rail line from Moscow to Tashkent in order to prevent the penetration of any potential Chinese or British influence. This introduced over 5,000 Russian railroad workers, who were later to be the source of labor disturbances. In the countryside, Russian migrants also led to rural violence. But the central government remained undaunted and continued to promote settlements. By 1911 Russians, numbering over 2 million, constituted 40 percent of the population of the eastern steppe, providing a firm foundation for Russian (Bolshevik) control over eastern Siberia during the Civil War and Intervention.

¹⁴⁷ I. L. Babich *et al.*, "Kavkazskie gortsy i kazaki na granitsakh imperii," in V. O. Bobrovnikov and I. L. Babich (eds.), *Severny Kavkaz v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2007), pp. 70–76.

¹⁴⁸ The following is based on V. V. Bartol'd, *Izucheniia vostoka v Evrope i Rossii* (Leningrad: Leningradskii vostochnyi institut, 1925), pp. 150–69, and Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1825–1923* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), especially chs. 2 and 4.

Borderlands

Like frontier, the term borderlands signifies the fluidity of geographical concepts in Eurasian imperial space. It is used in the following pages to describe territories on the periphery of the multicultural states that were carved out of the shifting frontiers and incorporated into the imperial system as separate administrative units, sometimes with autonomous institutions, reflecting their distinctive political and cultural features. Their status and relationship with the center of imperial power could change over time. Examples at different periods in history would be Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang in the Qing Empire; Azerbaijan in the Qajar Empire; the Crimean khanate, the Danubian principalities, and Bosnia in the Ottoman Empire; Galicia, Royal Hungary, and the Banat in the Habsburg Monarchy; and the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Kingdom of Poland in the Russian Empire.

The incorporation of a borderland into a multicultural state did not mean the end of the struggle over its political or cultural identity. Instead, it continued to be the object of struggles played out on two levels: externally among competing imperial states, and internally between the centers of power and the conquered peoples. Thus, borderlands faced frontiers in two directions: an inner cultural frontier turned toward the center of state power; and an outer, inherently unstable military frontier facing territories contested by rival powers.¹⁴⁹ The web of relationships between borderlands and the core was highly complex and underwent extensive changes over time. If the Eurasian empires were the objects of an Orientalist gaze from the west, then it is also true that the Eurasian multicultural states shared an Orientalist (or “barbarian”) perception of their own borderlands as culturally inferior or incapable of governing themselves.¹⁵⁰

Logically, the term borderland implies the existence of a core. Paradoxically, it is more difficult to arrive at a satisfactory spatial definition of core than it is of borderlands. In line with the geocultural approach, this study defines the core as a place shaped by the exercise and symbolic display of power. Its main components were the ruler, the court, the army command, the administrative offices, and the main residences of the

¹⁴⁹ Alexei Miller, “The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian Nationalism,” in Miller and Rieber (eds.), *Imperial Rule*, pp. 9–26.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review* 107(3) (June 2002): 1–32; David Schimmelpennick van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism. Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Mary Ferenczy, “Chinese Historiographers’ Views on Barbarian–Chinese Relations (14–16th Centuries),” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 21(3) (1968): 353–62.

ruling elite. Nothing illustrates the difficulty of locating the core than the phenomenon of moveable capitals, the most visible symbol of imperial rule. The Habsburgs moved early from Prague to Vienna, and would have had to change again had the Ottomans succeeded in either of their two sieges of Vienna. The shift in China from Nanking to Beijing (and back and forth again in the twentieth century) was a defensive response to the threat from the northern frontier. The change from Moscow to St. Petersburg (and back again in the twentieth century) was also a response to a frontier in a different direction for a different purpose. The Ottomans moved their capital from Bursa and Adrianople (Edirne) to Constantinople and again back to Edirne under Mehmed IV, which was perceived as the *gazi* center for jihad in Europe. In Iran, the shifts were more frequent than anywhere else until the twentieth century because of the enormous threats to the stability of the center from external enemies and provincial and tribal groups. In all these cases, the location and fortification of the capital city reflected to a greater or lesser extent the nature of the external threat and the proximity of the frontier.¹⁵¹

In the early years of imperial state formation, the centers of power tended to be more or less culturally and ethnolinguistically homogeneous. But as the empires expanded and became increasingly multicultural, the imperial capitals – Vienna, St. Petersburg, Constantinople-Istanbul, Tehran, and Beijing – became more cosmopolitan. Moreover, anomalies developed as the imperial capitals lost some of their symbolic centrality or monopoly of power. In the Habsburg Monarchy the settlement of 1867 split the center of power between the Austrian (Cisleithenian) and Hungarian (Transleithenian) lands. Budapest could claim to be as much a center of power as Vienna. Although Istanbul was incontestably the center of Ottoman power from the fifteenth century, its hinterland shifted from Rumelia to Anatolia as military defeats forced it to surrender territories in the Balkans. In Imperial Russia, the removal of the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg generated a cultural rivalry over which center embodied the true spirit of Russia. In Iran, cultural tension continued to exist between two centers in Turkic Azerbaijan (Tabriz) and on the Persian plateau (Isfahan and then Tehran). Under the Qing dynasty the Manchu sought to maintain two distinctive centers of power, one in their

¹⁵¹ For insights into moving capitals see Edward L. Farmer, *Early Ming Government. The Evolution of Dual Capitals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Eckart Ehlers, "Capitals and Spatial Organization in Iran. Esfahan, Shiraz, Teheran," in C. Adle and B. Hourcade (eds.), *Teheran. Capitale bicentenaire* (Paris: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1992), pp. 155–61. For the tension between Constantinople and Edirne, see Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, pp. 148–50.

homeland of Manchuria and the other in the ancient provinces of the Han Chinese with Beijing as the hinge.

Within the capitals and the peripheries group identities were also fluid. The shaping and reshaping of primary loyalties and allegiances, whether social, cultural, or political, continued into the nineteenth century and in many places down to the present. Identification with nation, still less with a nation-state was a relatively late phenomenon in Eurasia compared with Western Europe, and in many cases had not been completed at the turn of the twenty-first century. The problem of naming these social collectivities has continued to divide scholars. Although no vocabulary has been generally accepted, ethnolinguistic communities, while awkward, is preferable to pre-modern nations.¹⁵² Their emergence on the historical stage – ethnogenesis – has given rise to much debate among anthropologists. At every stage in the debate, the theoretical analysis of the process became more complex.¹⁵³

The historian seeking guidance on controversies over group identification in Eurasian history ends up confronting three approaches: the situational, which stresses the interaction of populations living within different ecological niches; the primordial, which deals with culturally essential characteristics; and the experiential, which explores the commonality of shared experience.¹⁵⁴ These approaches do not exhaust the problem of identification, nor are they exclusive. Some communities underwent a process of dissolution or amalgamation (can this be called ethnoterminus?). Shifting and multiple terminologies are often used to designate one and the same ethnic community either by the group itself or by outsiders; these may also change over time. For example, there is very little consistency in naming tribal groups in Trans Caspia either by the tribal

¹⁵² Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford University Press, 1986). Cf. John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). For a critique of Smith, see John Breuilly, "Approaches to Nationalism," in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso, 1996), pp. 146–74, and Smith's response in *Nationalism and Modernism. A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), esp. pp. 170–98.

¹⁵³ Key texts are Charles F. Keyes (ed.), *Ethnic Change* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1981); C. Carter Bentley, "Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnicity and Nationality," *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* 8(2) (1983): 1–53; C. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987): 24–55; T. Hyland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto, 1993); Walter Connors, *Ethnonationalism. The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹⁵⁴ A useful summary of these approaches as they apply to the Trans Caspian borderlands is Jo-Ann Gross (ed.), "Introduction: Approaches to the Problem of Identity Formation," in *Muslims in Trans Caspia. Expressions of Identity and Change* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 1–26.

members themselves or outside observers. Much the same is true of settled agriculturists in many areas of Eurasia. In extreme cases taken from the recent history of Belarus at one end and Xinjiang at the other end of Eurasia, indigenous cultivators of the land when asked to identify themselves responded that they were “locals.” In Macedonia, up to the nineteenth century, as contemporary observers noted, the population could have been transformed into Bulgarians or Serbs, possibly into Greeks, if they had been brought under prolonged and direct control of either one of the ethnically secure core lands. Finally, even self-conscious ethnic communities do not necessarily evolve into nations. They may or they may not; much depends on whether they are drawn into the nexus of literacy and intergroup communication, or undergo the influence of intellectuals and mass education, conditions that were not found everywhere until the mid-twentieth century, by which time many ethnic communities had simply vanished.¹⁵⁵

The great variety of borderlands and the mix of populations obliged the ruling elites of multicultural states to devise different administrative solutions to govern them. These generally aimed at taking into consideration historical and cultural factors. But the ruling elites and the conquered people did not often interpret these factors in the same way. Moreover, imperial rule frequently imposed changes in the organization or status of a borderland depending upon the exigencies of internal stability and external security.¹⁵⁶ In their attempts to strengthen the attachment of borderlands to the centers of power, imperial ruling elites periodically introduced reforms that affected imperial rule as a whole. These were most often prompted by defeat in frontier wars and the loss of territories or perceived threats to the integrity of the state.

The problem of defining a borderland is not simply an academic exercise; it has become absorbed into major political controversies, not least of which has been the polemics of the Cold War. Historians of societies that have found themselves reduced on occasion from an independent state to a borderland partitioned among competing multicultural states have devised an interpretation of their historical condition in civilizational terms. Such efforts are of long standing and enjoyed a revival during the Cold War. Polish and Hungarian historians have been over-represented in

¹⁵⁵ Breuilly, “Approaches.”

¹⁵⁶ Gabor Agoston, “A Flexible Empire. Authority and its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers,” in Kemal Karpat with Robert W. Zens (eds.), *Ottoman Borderlands. Issues, Personalities and Political Changes* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 15–32; Nicola di Cosmo, “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia,” *International History Review* 20(2) (June 1998): 287–309.

this group.¹⁵⁷ Summing up a tradition in Polish historiography, Oscar Halecki defined East Central Europe as “borderlands of Western Civilization.” Their destiny was to resist both German and Russian imperial expansion. Dismissing both a geographic and a racial determinism, he stressed the historical process that gave these lands without “permanent boundaries” their particular features that distinguished them from Eastern and Western Europe.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the Hungarian historians István Bibó and Jenő Szücs identified three historical regions of Europe. Szücs also used the term East Central Europe and summarized its defining features as varieties of “western structures in East European conditions.” By “western structures” he meant a set of institutions evolving from the feudal system and the absolutist state: the dual society of Church and state, the acceptance of Roman law, the growth of urban autonomy, the recognition of human dignity. Bibó called these “the plurality of small spheres of freedom.” Eastern European conditions were the expansion of the two imperial autocracies, Russian and Ottoman, and the formation of a hybrid variant of west and east under Habsburg rule. The combination of these external penetrations with the weakly developed “western structures” in Hungary and Poland created societies where the nobilities struggled to preserve the liberties of their medieval estates, yet upheld the institution or defended serfdom and excluded the urban estates from the political nation.¹⁵⁹ By contrast, Soviet historians sought to justify the incorporation of borderlands into the Russian Empire as the “lesser evil” in comparison with the fate in store for them had they fallen under the imperial expansion of other multicultural states.¹⁶⁰ Quite the reverse spin has characterized many nationalist histories in the successor states of the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

¹⁵⁷ Among the most influential purveyors of this myth were three great Polish poets, Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki, and Zygmunt Krasinski, and the romantic historian, Joachim Lelewel, who claimed that the Slavic principles of freedom (*wolność*) and citizenship (*obywatelstwo*) were most fully developed under the Poles. Manfred Kridl, *A Survey of Polish Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), ch. 8; Joan S. Skurnowicz, *Romantic Nationalism and Liberalism. Joachim Lelewel and the Polish National Idea* (New York: East European Monographs, 1981), esp. ch. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Oscar Halecki, *Borderlands of Western Civilization. A History of East Central Europe* (New York: Ronald Press, 1952).

¹⁵⁹ István Bibó, *A kelet-európai kisállamok nyomorúsága* (Budapest: Argumentum, [1946] 2011), unfortunately never translated into English, and Jenő Szücs, “The Three Historical Regions of Europe. An Outline,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29(2–4) (1983): 131–84.

¹⁶⁰ Lowell Tillet, *The Great Friendship. Soviet Historians on the Non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

Once a borderland was incorporated into a multicultural state the struggle over control shifted to the relations between the subjugated population and the center of imperial power. David Slater expresses this as the “imbrication of geopolitics and social movements,” a relationship which I would modify by substituting geoculture for geopolitics, and thus narrowing the distinction between the two while preserving the dynamic he proposes between “the territoriality of politics . . . as well as the transnational flows and penetrations of different kinds of power.”¹⁶¹ These reactions ranged along a wide spectrum from accommodation to resistance, terms that should not be regarded here as either fixed or essentialist. In the complex world of social realities they were flexible and not easily disentangled. Moreover, the responses were formulated within different contexts and were inextricably intertwined with the nature of imperial rule.¹⁶²

There was no discernible pattern of reaction to imperial rule within the borderlands. From the earliest conquests to the mid-twentieth century, individuals and whole social groups passed from accommodation to resistance and back again, oscillating between resignation and defiance as psychological moods, social conditions, and political pressures altered. Because the language and practices of accommodation and resistance followed different contours within separate cultures, they were often misinterpreted or misunderstood by the conquerors and the conquered, being fraught with psychological ambiguity and social complexity. The line between the two extremes, like that between imperial frontiers, was blurred and often crossed.¹⁶³

An analysis of these relationships must take into account a variety of historical circumstances. Much depended upon the nature and duration of the conquest; the extent to which an ethnic group was divided by a military frontier; the cultural distance separating the periphery from the core with respect to language, ethnicity, religion, and social organization; the nature of external pressure or intervention by foreign powers; the influence of the diasporas of the conquered people; the levels of collective consciousness arising from previous statist traditions; and, finally, the cultural policies of the ruling elites.

¹⁶¹ David Slater, “Spatial Politics/Social Movements. Questions of (B)orders and Resistance in Global Times,” in Steve Pile and Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 259–60.

¹⁶² Cf. Frederick Cooper and Ann L. Stoler, “Tensions of Empire: Colonial Control and Visions of Rule,” *American Ethnologist* 16 (1989): 608–10.

¹⁶³ Sherry Ortner, “Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal,” *Journal of Comparative Studies of Society and History* 10 (2005): 175.

Accommodation

Accommodation included many kinds of behavior ranging from passive acceptance of external authority to active political cooperation and complete identification with the hegemonic power of the imperial center. Accommodation is a complex phenomenon not only because of the variety of its forms. As many theorists have pointed out, accommodation may, under certain circumstances, be more apparent than real, subversive rather than supportive of the structures of power.¹⁶⁴ In Islam, this is expressed by the technical term *taqīyya* or religious dissimulation. Accommodation can also be both voluntary and forced. Its fluid nature cautions against rigid categories. For heuristic purposes, a rough hierarchy of beliefs and practices would begin with simple compliance with the laws, regulations, and obligations of imperial rule to the point of performing specific functions in commerce, local government, and frontier defense, while at the same time preserving a distinctive cultural identity. Acculturation would signify adopting the external cultural norms of the state-supported culture, speaking its language (at least in public), converting to the state religion or embracing the state ideology (even if observing it only indifferently), and following social practices. This final step toward assimilation would involve internalizing all aspects of, or fusing with, the dominant culture. A complete change in identity was rare in the borderlands because of the ethnoterritorial pattern of settlement and, particularly in the twentieth century, the persistence of primordial theories of classification whether racial or class based. Assimilation required a receptive environment on the part of both the ruling elites and social groups.¹⁶⁵ Common to all was a basic loyalty, whether genuine or opportunistic, to the dominant political order. Moreover, accommodation of any type required the connivance of the ruling power and the subject. The state had to provide opportunities and

¹⁶⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 24–26, 246–47, 324–25; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), pp. xiii, 31–32, refers to indigenous people who “remained other within the system which they assimilated and which assimilated them externally.” See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

¹⁶⁵ Much of the literature on assimilation in the Habsburg monarchy is devoted to the Jewish population. See, for example, the useful analyses by Marsha I. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867–1914. Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), pp. 3–12 and *passim*; Peter Hanak, “Problems of Jewish Assimilation in Austria Hungary,” in P. Thane *et al.* (eds.), *The Power of the Past* (Cambridge University Press, 1984); William O. McCagg, *A History of Habsburg Jews, 1670–1918* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

rewards for those seeking to accommodate, and the subject had to perform his or her duties consistently without relapse or reversal.

Under imperial rule the most widely practiced and mutually beneficial forms of accommodation were the social co-optation of elites through issuing patents of nobility or recognizing previous titles and ranks as a means of eliminating potential leaders of resistance. The Habsburgs granted patents of nobility to Hungarians, Poles, Croats, and others. The Russians were particularly active in opening the imperial nobility to such groups as the Baltic barons, the Ukrainian *starshina*, Muslim *murzas*, Polish *szlachta*, Georgian princes, and some tribal leaders from Trans Caspia.¹⁶⁶ The Ottomans confirmed the authority of religious leaders of Christian and Jewish communities; they granted titles to Christian converts to Islam who entered their service and often rose to the highest military and administrative positions in the empire. The Manchu ruling elite sought to maintain a degree of cultural distance from their Chinese and Mongol subjects, but at the same time they retained the Confucian tradition and examination system that opened a path, however narrow, to membership of the ruling elite. The Iranians ennobled tribal leaders, particularly among the Turkic people of the northern frontier.

The conquered elites of the imperial borderlands were motivated not only by the promise of privilege and the advancement of careers, but also by the belief that the alternative to working within the system would be a weak state that could easily fall under the domination of another, possibly harsher, master. This may help to explain why as late as the eve of the First World War there was little active sentiment for outright independence among most of the local elites in the borderlands of the multicultural empires.

A second attraction for collaborators was through service in the military or civilian bureaucracies. In both the Habsburg and Russian empires, for example, frontier guards like the Croats and Cossacks ranked among the most reliable troops in the imperial armies. In Iran, it was the Georgian slave armies, and in China the Manchu and Mongol bannermen who were among the elite formations. The janissaries in the Ottoman Empire were a unique case of recruiting and converting Christian children from the periphery, although the Porte also employed Kurdish auxiliaries. The Ottomans made extensive use of converted Christians, especially

¹⁶⁶ Alfred J. Rieber, "Sotsial'naia identifikatsiia i politicheskaia voliia: russkoe dvorianstvo ot Petra i do 1861 g.," in P.A. Zaionchkovskii, 1904–1983 gg. *Stat'i, publikatsii i vospominania o nem* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998), pp. 273–314; Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, pp. 202–6.

Armenians and Greeks, who played important roles as administrators and reformers, and Albanians as army officers and soldiers. Representatives from the borderlands often staffed bureaucracies. In Russia, there were a large number of Poles up to 1863, and always a small, but highly visible, representation from among the Baltic Germans, the Georgians, and Armenians. Tribal elements, like the Bashkirs, formed units of the Imperial cavalry. In the early years, the Qing dynasty heavily recruited officials among the Mongols. In Iran, the central bureaucracies remained dominated by Persians, but provincial governments were largely in the hands of local tribal elites.

Attempts to co-opt elites did not always win over their intended targets. Obstacles arose in cultures at opposite ends of the spectrum of social cohesion and political consciousness. At one extreme in the Russian Empire, the Polish nobles cultivated feelings of superiority toward their conquerors and retained a collective memory of a glorious, pre-conquest, state tradition that nourished a spirit of independence expressed periodically in open rebellion.¹⁶⁷ At another extreme among Caucasian mountaineers, the process of co-optation broke down in the face of social and political fragmentation that frustrated the application of a uniform policy.¹⁶⁸ One of the most ambitious and, until recently, neglected aspects of the many Russian policies aimed at assimilating the *inorodtsy* of the eastern borderlands was the introduction of the concept of citizenship (*grazhdanstvennost'*) as a means of transforming the local, customary social and juridical norms. But once again, the Russian bureaucrats found that "instead they had to share power with networks of native leaders and contend with pervasive resistance."¹⁶⁹

A different problem arose when new indigenous elites sought accommodation with imperial rule, but only on their own terms. Such was the Jadid movements in Muslim borderlands of the Russian Empire. One of their major aims "involved an attempt to overcome the split between the Russian and native publics through an entry of Muslims into the Russian

¹⁶⁷ L. E. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: Poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol'she* (Moscow: Indrik, 1999), esp. Pt. 1, ch. 1 and Pt. 2, ch. 2.

¹⁶⁸ Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejey, "Cooptation of Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the Sixteenth Century," in Marie Bennigson Broxop (ed.), *The North Caucasus Barrier. The Russia Advance Toward the Muslim World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 18–44.

¹⁶⁹ Dov B. Yarshevskii, "Empire and Citizenship," in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzarini (eds.), *The Russian Orient. Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1750–1917* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 58–79; Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews. The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983), pp. 13–42.

sphere.”¹⁷⁰ For the economic elites of the borderlands accommodation often offered tangible material rewards. These included special privileges, especially in developing commercial links with foreigners. For example, in the Russian Empire local administrators in the borderlands regarded the indigenous merchants as more enterprising and successful than the Russians and promoted their interests actively, especially in St. Petersburg and ports such as Riga and Odessa. In the Ottoman Empire, non-Muslim merchants benefited from the government’s policy of concessions to foreign traders to become intermediaries in the export trade and then to push out their erstwhile foreign patrons. By the late nineteenth century, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks on the periphery dominated trade with Europe. In Qing China, the government gave extensive privileges to the Mongol traders along the northern frontier and to Muslims in the west. It also allowed Chinese traders to operate beyond the otherwise closed frontier of Manchuria. These concessions often caused ethnic tensions, even violence, between the dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. But these were not generally directed against the government. Exceptional was the case of the revolt in Iran against the tobacco monopoly, when concessions granted to foreigners were perceived to be excessive by the indigenous merchants. The advantages accrued by the merchant ethnic minorities of the borderlands rendered them as a social group among the most passive and loyal subjects of the multicultural states.¹⁷¹

In religious affairs accommodation was very much a two-way street. Voluntary conversion to the state religion was, along with mastering the dominant language, the highest form of integration into the multicultural state in the pre-nationalist era. At least this was true in the Romanov, Habsburg, and Ottoman empires, whereas in Iran there is little evidence of it and in China no compelling reason for it. Where it was practiced the motivation appears to have been improvement in life chances, especially in fields like commerce and the arts or high government service. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, imperial governments were willing, as a rule, to welcome converts, acknowledging that their action erased any stain of ethnic difference. But they were not consistent in their efforts to

¹⁷⁰ Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform. Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), p. 235 and throughout.

¹⁷¹ Alfred J. Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 52–73; Halil Inalcik with Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. 2: 1600–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 518–19, 705, 837–41; Josef Mentsel and Gustav Otruba, *Österreichische Industrielle und Bankiers* (Vienna: Bergland Verlag, 1965). But cf. David Good, “National Bias in the Austrian Capital Market before World War I,” *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History* 14 (1977): 141–66.

carry out policies of forced conversion or, alternatively, to win support from religious minorities in the borderlands, especially in those cases where they identified religious belief with political opposition.

On occasion, the Habsburgs and Romanovs were willing to grant privileged status to certain sects and religious leaders who were willing to accept or preach obedience and loyalty to the ruling house.¹⁷² At times the Russian government practiced toleration in dealing with the Muslim population. But it was hostile to Roman Catholicism after the Polish revolt of 1863. Its policy toward the Jews was more complex, alternating between assimilation without acculturation to discrimination and repression.¹⁷³

In the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Counter Reformation, an attempt was made to create a half-way house for the Orthodox Church to accommodate Latin Christianity through the medium of the Uniat Church. Initially successful, during the period of Russian imperial rule it became the object of a fierce struggle between the official Orthodox hierarchy backed by the state and the Catholic hierarchy backed by the Papal See. Ottoman toleration of Christians and Jews was broad and generous in the early period, but dissipated when churches became identified with national liberation movements.¹⁷⁴ The Habsburg Monarchy proved to be the most enlightened in its treatment of the Jews, but was less well disposed toward the Orthodox population for the same reason as the Ottomans. The Chinese were tolerant of all religions until they became associated with rebellion, as during the Christian Taiping or Muslim revolts in Xinjiang. By contrast, in Iran the Sunni minority was persecuted as a dangerous ally of co-religionists across the Ottoman and Uzbek frontiers, and conversion to Shi'ism was forcible.

Resistance

Resistance to the conquest and incorporation of the borderlands, like accommodation, took many forms over time and in different regions. At

¹⁷² See, for example, Drago Roksandic, "Religious Tolerance and Division in the Krajina. The Croatian Serbs of the Habsburg Military Border," *Christianity and Islam in Southeastern Europe, Occasional Papers* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, East European Studies, 1997), p. 47; Robert Crews, "Empire and the Confessional State. Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth Century Russia," *American Historical Review* 108(1) (February 2003): 50–83.

¹⁷³ John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews. The Origins of the Jewish Question in Russia, 1772–1825* (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986); John Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855–1881* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁷⁴ Selim Deringil, "Redefining Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire. Policies of Conversion and Apostasy," in Miller and Rieber (eds.), *Imperial Rule*, pp. 107–32.

the micro-level, small acts of everyday resistance, the “unwritten texts” of James Scott, went largely unrecorded in the early periods of conquest and domination.¹⁷⁵ But the mere preservation of distinctive cultural identity, what Fredrik Barth has called boundary maintenance, could be by itself a form of resistance that enabled a conquered population to survive despite its inferior status in an imperial system.¹⁷⁶ In opting for one or another form of protest movement, the peoples of the borderlands were often governed by expectations about the level of repression their actions would incite.¹⁷⁷

Armed resistance to imperial rule in the form of rebellion was the most extreme form and differed in one important way from most rebellions in Western Europe over the same period. In the west, with the exception of the Celtic fringe (Brittany and Ireland), revolution was a state-building process; in the Eurasian borderlands, it was motivated by the opposite impulse, to oppose incorporation into an imperial multicultural state or to break away. On occasion, however, rebellion on the frontier like defeat in war could stimulate reforms at the center of power.¹⁷⁸

In borderlands with a statist tradition and strong landowning nobilities like Poland, Hungary, and Georgia, rebellions and anti-imperial conspiracies were led by the old elites. Among these were the three major Hungarian anti-Habsburg uprisings – the Bocskai in the first years of the seventeenth century, the Thököky rebellion in the 1670s, and the great Rákóczi rebellion in the early eighteenth century (1703–1711) – and the three major Polish rebellions against the Russians in 1791, led by Kosciusko, 1830, and 1863. In Georgia, nobles participated in the numerous uprisings against Russian rule in the first third of the nineteenth century culminating in the great conspiracy of 1832 inspired by the Polish insurrection. In all three cases, the rebellious nobles considered themselves to be the embodiment of the nation and disregarded the interests of the peasantry. What distinguished the Hungarian and Polish rebels was their invention of a tradition of resistance expressed in a new political language. The Hungarian tradition took as its points of departure the “resistance clause” of the Golden Bull granted by King Andrew II in

¹⁷⁵ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, esp. pp. 29, 37–41, 289–300.

¹⁷⁶ Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (London: Allen Unwin, 1969), pp. 14–15. Cf. Guy Herau, *L'Europe des ethnies* (Paris: Presses d'Europe, 1963), p. 58.

¹⁷⁷ James de Nardo, *Power in Numbers. The Political Strategy of Protest Rebellion* (Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁷⁸ For the effect of the “rebellious seventeenth century” in Muscovy on sparking a “cultural revolution,” see A. M. Panchenko, “Buntashnyi vek,” in *Iz Istarii russkoi kul'tury*, 3. *XVII-nachalo XVIII veka* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2000), pp. 11–24.

1222, and the related concept of dualism between king and estates as expressed in the *Gesta Hungarorum* (Deeds of the Hungarians) dating from the early 1280s, where the definition of the military nobility was linked to the nomadic Huns.¹⁷⁹ It was further developed by the humanists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the polemicists of the Reformation for whom the right of resistance was upheld in the face of religious persecution. Following the Ottoman invasion, the old multi-cultural Hungarian monarchy fell into three borderlands: Royal Hungary incorporated into the Habsburg Empire; the southern districts incorporated into the Ottoman Empire; and the principality of Transylvania sought to maintain a precarious independence between the contesting imperial powers. Resistance to both Ottoman and Habsburg domination continued to be justified in the name of the ancient liberties and corporate dualism.¹⁸⁰

In the Polish lands after the partitions there were many accents in the language of resistance. By the time of the uprising of 1831 they had formed a messianic chorus. In the Kingdom of Poland under Russian domination the language of resistance drew upon two not altogether compatible traditions: Sarmatianism (or Sarmatism); and the Enlightenment representing, respectively, the old szlachta way of life and the new thought from France. However, the neat distinction between the two, like that of Slavophilism and Westernism in Russia, can be exaggerated. Both traditions were of recent vintage in the early nineteenth century, although they harkened back to ancient myths. Polish Sarmatianism most probably influenced another mythical tradition that forged a link between the Ukrainian Cossacks and the Khazars, a steppe people of pre-Mongol Eurasia. Inserted into the *Pacta et Conditiones* of 1710 by Cossack officers in exile who elected a hetman committed to independence from Russia, it created a new genealogy that justified the existence of a Cossack nation separate from both Poland and Muscovy.¹⁸¹ In common with the invented traditions of the Hungarians and Poles, the Cossack myth celebrated a warrior culture and ancient liberties. For the beleaguered gentry of the western borderlands, the combination epitomized the historical basis for their resistance to foreign domination and the establishment or reestablishment of an independent state. The

¹⁷⁹ Simon Kézai et al. (eds.), *Gesta Hungarorum (The Deeds of the Hungarians)*, ed. and trans. László Veszprémy and Frank Schaer (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), especially the critical essay by Jenő Szűcs.

¹⁸⁰ László Kontler and Balázs Trencsényi, "Introduction," in *Hungary. De-Composing the Political Community* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007).

¹⁸¹ Serhii Plohiu, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations. Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 339–443.

penetration of the ideas of the Enlightenment would invert the tradition. Ancient liberties would henceforth be identified with those of the west, not the east.

In the case of the nomadic peoples, a legitimizing political discourse of resistance was less clearly articulated, but was not completely absent. It merely took a different form of expression. The steppe peoples' definition of what constituted submission differed from that of Moscow. While Moscow required an oath of allegiance (*sert'*), the surrender of hostages from important families (*amanat*), and the payment of a tax, normally in furs (*iasak*), the nomads regarded oaths as non-binding, resented the demands for hostages, and interpreted the gifts from the Russians as part of an exchange for furs. When conflicts arising from these misunderstandings are placed within the context of the nomads' traditional frontier warfare culture, it is hard to resist the conclusion of Michael Khodarkovsky that "peace was impossible" between the sedentary peoples and the steppe nomads.¹⁸² Such was the case, for example, with the four Bashkir uprisings against the Russians over the course of a century from 1662 to 1774. In the first three, the causes, though not altogether clear, appeared to have centered on resistance to paying certain taxes, including the fur tax; the behavior of Russian agents; and, more obscurely, the spontaneous outbreak of raiding Russian settlements for booty. In the great Pugachev rebellion of the eighteenth century, nomads joined Cossacks and peasants, but its leaders did not accept the authority of the "pretender" to the Romanov throne and went their own way.¹⁸³

Among peoples without a statist tradition, violent resistance to imperial rule mainly took the form of banditry and peasant risings, or *jacquerie* during the first imperial phase of the struggle over the borderlands. Heavy taxation and discriminatory land policies were the main economic source of grievances among the conquered population, and were a cause for resistance that they often shared with the peasantry of the core lands. In the Balkan borderlands, from the Adriatic to the north Caucasus, the Danube to the Aegean, the Caucasian isthmus and the Pontic steppe, resistance had deep roots in the social phenomenon of banditry, military brotherhoods, and local militias for self-protection. They flourished at the peripheries of imperial power, along frontiers or in mountainous regions.

¹⁸² Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*, esp. ch. 2. At least in the very long run. In Siberia, as elsewhere along the Eurasian frontiers, trade often mitigated conflict. See, for example, Yurii Malikov, *Tsar, Cossacks and Nomads. The Formation of a Borderland Culture in Northern Kazakhstan in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2011).

¹⁸³ Nolde, *La formation*, pp. 208–35. Muslim clergy were involved, but it is unclear as to what extent.

They were variously called *uskoks*, *armatolas*, *haiduks*, and *klephts* in the Balkans; Cossacks along the river valleys of the Pontic steppe from the Zaporozhians on the Dnieper to the Don, Kuban, and Iaik (Ural); and mountaineers (Chechens) in the north Caucasus. Empire-builders often hired them as mercenaries, but when they were dismissed from service they frequently turned to plundering and raiding. The Venetians employed the Uskok pirates and revived the use of Greek militias (*armatolas*), originally formed under Byzantine rule, against the Turks. Selim I (1512–1520) adopted the name for internal security forces to be employed against Greek bandits (*klephts*). But the militiamen often went over to the other side and played an active role in the Greek Revolution of the early nineteenth century. The term *haiduk* (Hungarian for cattle drivers) was originally applied in the sixteenth century to Magyar, Serb, and Vlach pastoralists who fled the Ottoman occupation into the forests and mountains where they conducted a partisan war against their oppressors. Some of them were enrolled as irregular troops in the Habsburg army. Others were recruited by István Bocskai, a Calvinist magnate, later elected prince of Transylvania, when he revolted against the Habsburgs in alliance with the Turks.

During the seventeenth century in the Danubian provinces and Greek archipelago, the terms *haiduks*, *klephts*, and *armatolas* appear more frequently in the sources. Their increased activity was largely a product of intermittent warfare and the breakdown of public order. Their plundering and raiding did not endear them to the local peasant population, whether Christian or Muslim.¹⁸⁴ But gradually, and especially in the south Slavic lands, the haiduks acquired a mythopoeic quality as the heroic bandit. Celebrated in the folk epos, their deeds, dress, and conduct were minutely described. Among Serbians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, and Greeks, in the nineteenth century the haiduks and klephts were cast in the role of protonational opponents of the Turkish domination.¹⁸⁵ These

¹⁸⁴ Dmitrije Djordjevic and Stephen Fischer-Galati, *The Balkan Revolutionary Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 31–32, 42. Called *hajdús* in Hungary, they were roaming bands of Protestant garrison soldiers. Pál Fodor, “The Ottomans and their Christians in Hungary,” in Andor and Tóth (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith*, p. 146.

¹⁸⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (New York: Norton, 1959), but cf. Anton Blok, “The Peasant and the Brigand. Social Banditry Reconsidered,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14(4) (September 1972): 494–503; Bistra Cvetkova, “Mouvements anti-féodaux dans les terres bulgares sous domination ottomane du XVIe au XVIIIe siècles,” *Études historiques* 2 (1965): 146–68; Dennis N. Skiotis, “Greek Mountain Warriors and the Greek Revolution,” in Vernon J. Perry and Malcolm E. Yapp (eds.), *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 308–29; Christopher Boehm, *Montenegrin Social Organization and Values. Political Ethnography of a Refuge Area Tribal Adaptation* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), pp. 132–33.

traditions were revived in modern form during the twentieth century, and were particularly strong in the Greek and Yugoslav resistance movements during the Second World War.

The Cossack communities originated as freebooters on the frontiers outside the control of state authority. Although nominally Orthodox, they raided and plundered the lands of Turkic Muslims, and Russian and Polish Christians with equal enthusiasm. In the seventeenth century, the Polish kings occasionally enrolled a specific number of "registered" Cossacks as auxiliaries, as did the tsar. But these arrangements often broke down and led to rebellions. The Zaporozhian and Don Cossacks constituted the main leadership of the great peasant rebellions of the seventeenth century. Although the Cossacks' autonomy, and hence their resistance, was finally broken under Catherine II, their exploits were enshrined in chronicles and *belles lettres* that became the founding myth of Ukrainian nationalism. As the Russians advanced into the Caucasus, Trans Caspia, and Inner Asia, they resettled Cossacks along their porous frontiers to ensure the security of the colonists. On the north Caucasus frontier they played a major role in subjugating the mountaineers. Here too, however, they sometimes changed sides or else, like some Uskoks, swore oaths of blood brotherhood with their Muslim counterparts. In the long run, the Habsburg and Russian empires were more successful than the Ottomans, if not completely so, in bringing the rebellious elements of the populations under imperial authority. Along the fringes of Eurasian Islam, from the Caucasian isthmus to the fringes of Inner Asia, the Sufi sects, especially the Naqshbandi in the nineteenth century, were often the sources of rebellions. "When these movements spilled over the porous frontiers and joined forces with their equivalents in neighboring regions they became particularly serious liabilities for the Ottomans."¹⁸⁶ In the struggle over the borderlands between the Ottoman and Safavid empires, certain Shi'ia orders of Alevi Turkmens were among those who defected to Iran, earning for the entire tribe the reputation of rebels and traitors.

Flight and migration were another form of resistance in the Eurasian borderlands. Examples abound: the Great Migration of the Serbs fleeing Ottoman occupation at the end of the seventeenth century; the flight of the Zaporozhian Cossacks from Russian to Habsburg lands at the end of the eighteenth century; the emigration of the Crimean Tatars following Russian occupation of their homeland in 1783; the great Kazakh migration of the eighteenth century; the flight of the Oirat Mongols from Qing power in the eighteenth century; the departure in 1859 of Muslim

¹⁸⁶ Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 35.

mountain tribes from the Russian to the Ottoman Empire. The emigration of Polish participants in the rebellion of 1863 created an important center of resistance in exile. The flight of the Armenians from Turkish rule at the end of the nineteenth century was more a matter of survival, but it also contributed to a form of diaspora in resistance that exercised widespread influence in Western Europe and the United States directed against the Ottoman Empire.

The diaspora of unsuccessful rebels, Poles, Hungarians, Armenians foremost among the peoples of the borderlands, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to conspiracies, publication and dissemination of illegal propaganda, and even participation in the armed forces of the enemies of their enemy; the Polish Legionnaire tradition being the most active and persistent of these. They set a precedent for the activities of the various governments, committees, and parties in exile that were to play an important part in the resistance and struggle over the borderlands during the First and Second World Wars. In time of war the central state power often anticipated or reacted to the defection of peoples of the borderlands by executing its own repressive population transfers. Extreme measures of ethnic cleansing were aimed at allegedly hostile or inassimilable elements in the population, a form of state-sponsored civil war with repression anticipating resistance.¹⁸⁷

Resistance by Christian peasants under Ottoman rule increased throughout the eighteenth century largely as the result of economic exploitation by local Muslim elites (*ayans*) and the declining authority of the central government.¹⁸⁸ In the borderlands of the Qing, mixed economic and religious conflicts provoked the Muslim rebellions in Gansu in the northwest, and the Uighur–Mongol–Han rebellions in western Turkestan (Xinjiang). But caution should be exercised in equating these rebellions with modern ethnic and national types.¹⁸⁹

In Iran, tribal revolts were not confined to the borderlands. However, from time immemorial they flourished in the Kurdish regions and especially in Azerbaijan, which became notorious in Iranian history as a rebellious province like Xinjiang later became in Chinese

¹⁸⁷ Alfred J. Rieber (ed.), "Repressive Population Transfers in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. A Historical Overview," in *Forced Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, 1939–1950* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 1–27; Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell, "Population Displacement, State-Building and Social Identity in the Lands of the Former Russian Empire, 1917–23," *Kritika* 4(1) (Winter 2003): 51–101.

¹⁸⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), remains the standard survey. See also Djordjević and Fischer-Galati, *The Balkan Revolutionary Tradition*.

¹⁸⁹ Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers. A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997).

history.¹⁹⁰ Under different circumstances these two provinces would become centers of rebellions during and after the Second World War, leading to Soviet intervention and tensions with the governments of Iran, and both Nationalists and Communists in China as well as the United States and Great Britain.

In the nineteenth century, growing nationalist sentiment among peoples of the borderlands gradually transformed the nature of banditry and peasant wars.¹⁹¹ If *jacqueries* had erupted mainly from economic grievances in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they increasingly took on the trappings of nationalist rebellions. Long-standing economic, ethnic, and religious grievances in the countryside were re-directed by the emerging civil and military intelligentsia, occasionally supported by clerics, and fused with workers' strike movements and student protests that also contained national and class components. The timing, social composition, and leadership of peasant-centered national liberation movements differed widely among the borderlands of the multicultural empires, reflecting local geocultural conditions. The earliest broke out in the western Balkans. Rural rebellions on the frontiers became recurrent during the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from southeast Europe.¹⁹² By the early years of the twentieth century, the rising curve of peasant disorders combined with urban protests created highly volatile social conditions in the Russian Empire, which culminated in the revolution of 1905 when some of the most intense fighting occurred in the imperial borderlands.¹⁹³ The rebellions that weakened and then brought down the Qajar dynasty originated in Iranian Azerbaijan. In the Qing Empire the great uprisings of the nineteenth century were not typical peasant rebellions. They occurred mainly in frontier regions either on the outer perimeters like Xinjiang, "the most rebellious" of the provinces, or else in the border areas between provinces

¹⁹⁰ Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia*, pp. 112–15, 119.

¹⁹¹ John Walton and Geza Seddon, *Free Markets and Food Riots. The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford University Press, 1994), ch. 2; James Hughes, "Re-evaluating Stalin's Peasant Policy in 1928–30," in Judith Pallot (ed.), *Transforming Peasants. Society, State and Peasantry, 1861–1930* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 238–42. Cf. Leslie Anderson, *The Political Ecology of the Modern Peasant. Calculation and Community* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 5–18.

¹⁹² Quataert, "The Age of Reforms," pp. 876–83.

¹⁹³ Teodor Shanin, *Russia 1905–07. The Revolution as a Moment of Truth*, 2 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), vol. II, pp. 66–70; Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, 2 vols. (Stanford University Press, 1988), vol. I, pp. 152–60. See also L. M. Ivanov, A. M. Pankratova, and A. L. Sidorov (eds.), *Revoliutsiia 1905–1907 gg. v natsional'nykh raionakh Rossii* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1955).

where ethnic and religious minorities were strong.¹⁹⁴ The persistent threat on the northern frontier led to a “militarization” of Chinese society, that is, the formation of self-defense groups, providing a large reservoir for rebellion.¹⁹⁵

Rebellions haunted the multicultural states by raising the specter of foreign intervention. They were a constant reminder of the fragility of imperial rule over the borderlands. Russia was particularly vulnerable to the double threat of rebellion and foreign intervention, beginning with the Time of Troubles (1603–1613). In the eighteenth century, the central government feared that the Bashkir uprisings might trigger Ottoman intervention, or, in the nineteenth century, that the two Polish rebellions might entail European intervention. The nightmare became reality during the period of the Russian Civil War and Intervention, creating a psychology of fear and suspicion of internal enemies that gripped Soviet policy makers during and after the Second World War.

The Ottoman Empire confronted an equally threatening situation in its borderlands where the Russians repeatedly sought to intervene by demanding reforms that would promote the interests of the Christian population. The sultans occasionally sought to reverse the tactic by inciting the Muslim tribesmen in the Caucasus, but more tentatively and with much less success. The Russians also exploited Muslim rebellions against the Qing in western Turkestan in the nineteenth century. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ottomans supported Hungarian rebels against the Habsburgs in their struggle to gain control of the Danubian borderlands. The links between rebellions and foreign intervention would multiply during the two world wars in the twentieth century and played an important role in the coming of the Cold War.

Closely related to the danger that rebellions could spark foreign intervention or that foreign wars could ignite internal rebellions was the nightmare of dismemberment. Rulers and ruling elites often feared that the combination of defeat in a foreign war connected to a domestic rebellion could spread from one region to the entire periphery, creating conditions for multiple wars of succession or national liberation. In acute form the Habsburgs faced that prospect in 1848, the Russians in 1855 and 1918, the Ottomans in 1878, the Iranians in 1908, and the Chinese in 1911.

¹⁹⁴ Sue Naquin and Evelyn Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), see esp. the chart on p. 228.

¹⁹⁵ Philip Kuhn, *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China. Militarization and Social Structure, 1796–1864* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), esp. pp. 6–15, 29–30, 88.

An arc of flash points

In the course of state-building the multicultural conquest empires of Eurasia were drawn into a struggle over the borderlands all along a great continuum of contested frontiers extending from the Baltic to the Sea of Japan. Within this space mass population movements and the shifting fortunes of war produced a string of unstable shatter zones, kaleidoscopes of peoples of different ethnolinguistic and religious groups. As the struggle intensified, these trouble spots assumed greater importance for the external security and internal stability of imperial rule. To anticipate the following narrative, they became the sites of small and large wars, and many of the major rebellions of Eurasia from the sixteenth century to the First World War. The postwar reconstruction did not eliminate them from the territories of the successor states: the governments of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Iran, and China. To understand how the struggle over the territories and peoples of the borderlands affected the domestic and foreign affairs of the imperial multicultural states and, by implication and extension, their twentieth-century successors, it will be necessary to turn to the peculiarities of the continuous process of state-building in Eurasia that unfolded from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that was still incomplete at the collapse of empire. The following two chapters will explore the attempts by the ruling elites to invent an imperial ideology or political theology to function as a legitimizing force in welding together disparate cultural traditions and social groups, and to erect the institutional framework within which to exercise their political and military control over the borderlands.