CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Political Science

Master's Thesis

2024   **Alexander Purton**

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The Steppe Tradition of Geopolitics: Implications for Post-Soviet Reimperialization

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Geopolitical Studies

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30/04/24   Alexander Joseph Purton

Abstract

This thesis examines Alexander Motyl's theory of *Reimperialization* with regard to Post-Soviet Russia. The objective of this thesis is to explain the means by which Russia was able to successfully reimperialize despite Motyl's predictions of unsuccessful reimperialization. The thesis examines the Soviet Union from an institutionalist point of view, emphasising the institutional continuity between the Soviet "Empire" and previous Steppe Empires. In doing so, this thesis adopts the Steppe Tradition of State Development as an explanatory framework for Russia's successful reimperialization.

Abstrakt

Tato práce zkoumá teorii Reimperializace Alexandra Motýla s ohledem na postsovětské Rusko. Cílem této práce je vysvětlit, jakými prostředky se Rusko dokázalo úspěšně reimperializovat navzdory Motylovým předpovědím o neúspěšné reimperializaci. Práce zkoumá Sovětský svaz z institucionalistického hlediska a zdůrazňuje institucionální kontinuitu mezi sovětským „impériem" a předchozími stepními říšemi. Přitom tato práce přijímá stepní tradici vývoje státu jako vysvětlující rámec pro úspěšnou reimperializaci Ruska.

Keywords

Russia, Soviet Union, Steppe Tradition, Alexander Motyl, Empire, State Formation, Liberal Institutionalism, Francis Fukuyama

Klíčová slova

Rusko, Sovětský Svaz, Stepní Tradice, Alexander Motyl, impérium, formování státu, liberální institucionalismus, Francis Fukuyama

Title

The Steppe Tradition of Geopolitics: Implications for Post-Soviet Reimperialization

Název práce

Stepní Tradice Geopolitiky: Důsledky pro Postsovětskou Reimperializaci

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Introduction: The Trampling of Ukraine

> "*I have said it often;*
> *if the west does not stabilise the East,*
> *the East will destabilise the West*"
>
> Vaclav Havel

At 03:59 Eastern European Time on the night of the 23rd of Feburary, 2022, the lights went out at a border checkpoint near the small town of Kalanchak in Kherson Oblast, Ukraine.[1] The four guardsmen who lost their lives at Kalanchak were the first casualties in a new phase of the conflict that had originally begun in the Donbas in 2014.[2] An hour later, as bombs rained on major population centres, Russian President, Vladimir Putin appeared in a televised address announcing the commencement of a "Special Military Operation".[3]

Beyond its later significance as the point of first engagement, however, Kalanchak is symbolic for other reasons. Founded initially by Crimean Tatars under the name *Kale-Kuçuk* ("Little fort"), and later used a later refuge for Cossack Refugees of the *1794 Turbai Peasant Uprising,* Kalanchak, on one hand, serves as testament to Ukraine's complex history.[4] As such, it represents Ukraine's dual identity as being simultaneously part of Europe and part of the Eurasian Steppe.[5] Such a history continues today with Ukraine's emerging observer status on the Organisation of Turkic States.[6]

On the other hand, however, Kalanchak, as a product of Russian colonialism, is representative of a larger narrative of the War; that of Russia as "the last European Colonial Empire".[7] Seen in this light, the War in Ukraine – as well as the violence that has occurred contemporaneously in Central Asia and the Caucasus – are not isolated events,

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[1] (Lister, et al., 2022)
[2] (Tarash, 2023)
[3] (Simmons, 2022)
[4] (Kubijovyč, 1988, p. 402)
[5] Not to be confused with the Soviet idea of the same name, see (Fitzgerald, 1993)
[6] (Imamoğlu, 2020)
[7] (Imozemtsev, 2017)

but systemic of a *Eurasian Post-Imperial Geopolitical Order*.[8] In this framing, Russia's formal and informal presence on the Steppe is part of an imperial project that began with the conquest of Kazan in 1552.[9]

Certainly, Political Scientists such as Maria Mälksoo have been quick to refer to the outbreak of war as a "decolonising moment of sorts", and so-called "post-Soviet" European states have often being the loudest voices in asserting support for Ukraine.[10] Yet there is more at stake here, and it goes well beyond modernist categorizations of Russia as a "post-colonial colonial empire".[11] The extent to which the Russia's decision to go to war was "shocking" to western analysts is revealing.[12] It speaks to broader inability for the Western World, grounded in its own diplomatic traditions, to understand Russia and its intentions. With that in mind, this thesis seeks to answer broader questions about the composition, mentality, and motivations of the Russian State. It will conclude that such is the consequence of Russia's development as an Empire in the *Steppe Tradition*.

This thesis will begin by establishing a general investigative toolset – recounting briefly the development of International Relations as a discipline. The tools of inquiry will then be applied to Russia's geopolitical conditions. In the second chapter, it will then proceed by classifying Russia as an Empire – a concept that will be explored in great detail, along with theories of State Formation. In this effort, the works of Francis Fukuyama will be consulted, although with some reservation. In light of Russia's renewed prominence on the World Stage, the thesis will explore Alexander Motyl's theory of Imperial Revival. A case study of the Austro-Hungarian Empire will be provided for reasons of comparison. The first part of this thesis will thus conclude with a question – why was Motyl incorrect in his analysis of Imperial Collapse in Russia? In other words, why was Russia able to Imperialise? Why is Russia different?

In the third chapter, the Eurasian Steppe, a constant of Russian history, will be examined not as a passive actor but as an active force on institutional development. The Hunnic

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[8] (Snyder, 2022)
[9] (Nossov, 2012, p. 51)
[10] (Budrytė, 2023, p. 82)
[11] (Kuzio, 2022)
[12] (Cobbe, 2022)

Empire of the Xiong-nu will be presented as the first of a long line of Steppe polities, and an archetype of political analysis. With this in mind, the research on the so-called "Steppe Tradition of Politics" – the product of Iver B. Neumann, Einar Wigen, and Nicola Di Cosmo, among others – will be applied, with attention drawn to the differences between Steppe polities and States. The third chapter will thus conclude on a typology of Steppe Empires, as well as a detailed review of *Hybridized Empires* with the examples of the Ottomans and the Kingdom of Hungary.

Having introduced the *Steppe Tradition* and the broader concept of Empires, the fourth chapter will seek to include Russia within the retinue of "Steppe Empires". It will chart the evolution of Russian intuitions, taking great care to emphasise differences between the Russian tradition and the implied "European tradition". It will explore Russia's prehistory, foundation, modernization and contemporary existence, with specific focus on territorial and institutional changes. References will be made to potential turning-points in institutional development, with comparisons to other polities that developed differently. It will conclude by presenting Russia and Central Asian States as being outgrowths of a final stage of political development in the Steppe Tradition. The third chapter will thus seek to answer the question "Why is Russia Different"?

The final chapter will seek to answer the remaining two questions. Motyl's thesis will be re-introduced, along with the concept of Post-Imperial Order. Reference will again be made to the Steppe Tradition – with comparison drawn between Russia and other polities. The war in Ukraine will thus be presented as a turning point in the geopolitics of Inner Eurasia generally. Reference will be made to the numerous existing theories of Russia's motivations. Finally, the implications of this analysis on the development of the modern Central Asian states will be explored. The thesis will conclude with a brief overview of what has been discussed. It will then emphasise the importance of institutions and their continued study.

1. Establishing a Theoretical Framework

An investigation is only as effective as a tools used in its conduct. Conclusions are the result of information weighed with the theoretical understandings of its significance – as such, a thesis without a theoretical framework is no thesis at all, but rather a collection of observations. This chapter will begin by introducing the various schools of International Relations Theory. It will then attempt to construct an epistemological framework that incorporates the schools of thought for certain aspects of analysis where the author has deemed such to be appropriate. It shall, however, begin by establishing the general emergence of International Relations as a discipline.

For as long as there has been *nations*[13] there has been International Relations; the earliest records of diplomacy date back to the organised Sumerian city states of Iraq.[14] Geopolitics, likewise, has existed in one form or another since *time immemorial*. For as long as there has been *land* (γῆ – geia), and as long as there has been the *polity* (πολιτεία – politeia); there has been an understanding that the former impacts and shapes the latter.[15] Yet it wasn't until the onset of Enlightenment rationality that there was a need to examine and categorise the phenomena empirically. The intersection of these two factors is, thus, made manifest in the study of *Geopolitics*; a subset of International Relations study with a focus on the impact of geography on policymaking.[16] Yet whilst Geopolitical Thought has its origins in 19th century writers such as Rudolf Kjellen and Friedrich Ratzel;[17] it was not until the British development of *International Relations* as an academic discipline that Geopolitics emerged as its counterpart.[18] That said, Geopolitics did not share with International Relations its roots in Aberystwyth University's *Liberal Institutionalism*;[19] but rather held the realism and cartographical empiricism of its founders, Edward Hallet Carr and Sir Halford John Mackinder.[20] This work is, in part, based on the observations made over a century ago by latter.

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[13] Note that the term "nation" here is used in a distinctly pre-modern sense. This will be expanded upon in Part 2.2.
[14] (Buzan & Little, 2000, p. 20)
[15] (Wilbanks, et al., 1997)
[16] (Deudney, 2000, p. 77)
[17] (Leira, 2019, p. 187)
[18] (Spencer, 1988, p. 42)
[19] (Acharya, 2019, p. 92)
[20] (Ashworth, 2010, p. 279)

Born from a duality in outlook, the history of International Relations and Geopolitics is, thus, a history of great debates.[21] These debates, in order of succession, pitted *Realism* against *Idealism (1920-1939)*, *Traditionalists* against *Behaviouralists (1945-1979)*, *Pluralists* against *Globalists* (1979-1989), and finally *Positivists* against *Post-positivists* (1989-present).[22] It is worth noting that the debates may or may not have ever happened, or may have happened more than once; rather, the use of the term is as a pedagogical tool to introduce phases of contentions within the academy.[23] Whilst for the purpose of this paper, the full spectrum of ideas can, regretfully, not be included; the framework of analysis chosen for this thesis will be given comparative explanations according to the various existing paradigms.

As such, Chapter 5 of this thesis will broadly follow the orientation of Dr Su Hongdah's *European Integration between 1958 and 1969: A Theoretical Debate*,[24] seeking to extrapolate the findings of the paper into a series of future outcomes through a comparative analysis of paradigms. That being said, a brief introduction of the relevant ideas included in our final analysis is necessary. This will be followed by the subject matter in question – that is, "Central Asia" and the Geopolitics of the Eurasian Steppe more generally. Firstly, however, it is necessary to cover the history of International Relations as a discipline, and chart out the theoretical framework utilised in this work. As such we turn firstly to the Great Debates.

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[21] This framework has come under question, see (Wilson, 1998, p. 1).
[22] (Dunne, et al., 2006, p. 11)
[23] (Ashworth, 2002, p. 33)
[24] (Su, 2010)

1.1 The History of International Relations and Geopolitics

The first of the Great Debates emerged following the end of the First World War; the impotence of the League of Nations and failure of the international community to prevent further conflict led to a resurgence of *Realism* against the dominant **Idealist** framework of the time.[25] That framework, which had its roots in In the 20th Century, Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*[26] and the post-war Wilsonian optimism maintained that the economic cost of war was so great that no one could possibly hope to gain by starting a war the consequences of which would be so disastrous".[27] Despite the apparent failure of *Commerce Peace Theory* to chart the irrationality of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy, *Liberalism,* the descendant of *Idealism*, remains a functionally accepted "theory" of International relations study.[28] Nonetheless, the outbreak of war with Nazi Germany in 1939, led to the emergence of *Realism* as the dominant policy.

It is perhaps fitting, then, that the resurgence of **Realism** in the academy, with its darker worldview, was in part the work of French Jewish intellectual, Dr Raymond Aron. Disenchanted by the failures of *Idealism* to account for the "impact of regimes",[29] Aron "revolted" against his schooling and sought to re-centre the then *passé* ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Clausewitz.[30] Like all *Realists*, Aron viewed International Relations as taking place in the "shadow of war" – an anarchy in which the monopoly on violence could not be established by any state and thus resembled the Hobbesian *State of Nature*.[31] According to Aron, power is to be measured by material constraints – geography, demography, economy, and politics.[32]

As such, Aron shared in common the *Realist* presumption of self-interest as the core driver of policy, yet differed from the later ideas of Hans Morgenthau in the latter's emphasis on the role of raw power.[33] Together with Morgenthau, however, Aron holds that structural

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[25] (Bennyworth, 2011)
[26] (Angell, 1910)
[27] (Joll, 1992, p. 202)
[28] (Aron, 1967, p. 187)
[29] (Aron, 1978, p. 102)
[30] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 13)
[31] (Aron, 1981, p. 446)
[32] (Aron, 1981, p. 279)
[33] (Morgenthau, 1949, p. 13)

impact on state behaviour is not decisive, and that State behaviour is not always directed by *rational interest*.[34] State behaviour, then, is influenced by the conditions of states themselves; the culture, technology and perceptions. An example often cited is that of the Ming and Qing Dynasties of China, who spent great effort to prevent subjugation by the peoples of the borderland (as had previously happened) at great expense to their maritime interests.[35] Having not realised the change in their national interests, China was ultimately left them unprepared to face down encroachment from the European Colonial Empires and a resurgent Japan.[36]

In this revolt, Aron was joined by the former head of the Wilson Chair of International Relations at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, E. H. Carr.[37] A former *Liberal*, Carr became increasingly disillusioned with the League of Nations and the *Idealism* that dominated it.[38] Breaking with the orthodoxy of his contemporaries, Carr declared *Idealism* to be "hollow and without substance", and that it was no longer possible to base international relations upon a "harmony of interests" – particularly when the changing global system had rendered such interests divergent.[39] Instead, Revisionist States could be managed by upholders of the status quo through the latter making concessions in the interest of upholding the existing order.[40] That said, Carr came to decry "the mass sacrifice of human beings to the idol of nationalism" – viewing nationalist movements themselves as being incompatible with the status quo of multiethnic states.[41] Yet it is important to understand Revisionist states for what they represent – a potential paradigm shift in the international system. Morgenthau, saw in Domestic politics the suppression of the human "will to power" by cultural and institutional norms.[42] Such norms were absent in international politics, and as such, State behaviour was shaped more by the natural laws of struggles between states.[43] Yet the presumption of a persistent and overriding *will to*

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[34] (Kirshner, 2015, p. 155)
[35] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 11)
[36] (Lancaster, 2023)
[37] (Bennyworth, 2011)
[38] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 19)
[39] (Carr, 1946, p. 224)
[40] (Carr, 1946, p. 87)
[41] (Carr, 1968, p. 34)
[42] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 86)
[43] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 87)

power ignores the very real *will to cooperate* that is also evident in human behaviour – a factor which *Liberals* are quick to highlight in response.[44]

Libralism emphasises both the plurality of state actions, as well as the plurality of states themselves – seeing more than just interests as being the driving factor of policymaking.[45] On the plurality of states; rather than viewing the state as a monolithic entity, *Liberals* frame their analysis on the social nature of the state as a form of communal organisation. National interests, then, are the result dialogue between various domestic interest groups.[46] Dr Richard Rosecrance, for example, sees foreign policy as a functional extension of domestic conditions. In this sense, the collapse of the *Concert of Europe* and the subsequent conflicts are viewed by Rosecrance as being a direct consequence of the fierce competition between Liberal Nationalists and the Conservative Elite in the late 19th Century.[47] When the dust cleared, Conservative Elites remained in control, but were now tied to a policy of increasingly appeasing their Conservative Nationalist base in expanding territory and prestige – a pattern of behaviour that ultimately led to the First World War.[48]

In many ways the resurgence of *Liberalism* in the background of the second "Great Debate" of the 1920s (between *Traditionalist Realists* and *Behaviouralists*) was in part, an attempt to answer the questions brought about by what Augusto Del Noce calls the "Crisis of Modernity" – that great wave of uncertainty brought about by the death of the presumptions of "Pre-Modernity" in the bloodbath of the First World War.[49] In Del Noce's view, the deliberate move away from theocentrism and toward anthropocentric materialism, as well as the massive changes in the economic structures of society, led to a general "loss of transcendence" and ambiguation of man's place in the world.[50] Leo Strauss, whose work also describes modernity "as a political project",[51] viewed the

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[44] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 13)
[45] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 80)
[46] (Su, 2010, p. 33)
[47] (Rosecrance, 1963, p. 103)
[48] (Rosecrance, 1963, p. 195)
[49] (Warren, 2014, p. 715)
[50] (Noce & Lancellotti, 2014, p. 100)
[51] (Millerman, 2024)

imposition of anthropocentric metaphysics as "lowering the standards" of political philosophy more generally.[52]

If God is dead, then it is man's duty to make morality on his own terms; thus John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, whilst seemingly diametrically opposed, share a common emphasis on a kind of "methodological individualism".[53] One response to this harsh reality is a retreat back into the divine and the traditional – a position advocated by Del Noce himself, along with other philosophers such as Leo Strauss, Martin Heidegger, Carl Schmidt, Julius Evola and, more recently, Alexander Dugin.[54] Another response to man's cosmological loneliness is to forge ahead in pursuit of that which is "good" in humanity itself – a view that lends itself to a vision of man not as a violent and pragmatic beast, but as a higher more "divine" creature unto himself.[55] This view holds man as not being driven solely by a desire to survive and dominate, but by genuine "will to cooperate" – a view that is then extended to an interstate level.[56]

Emmanuel Kant, to whom many *Liberals* trace their ideological genealogy, spoke of the domestication of foreign policy throughout the 18th Century. In *Towards a Perpetual Peace*, Kant wrote "[if] the consent of the citizens is required to decide whether or not war is to be declared, it is very natural that they will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise".[57] The social nature of states thus renders cooperation between states as a more effective policy orientation than direct competition – a stance most observable in the concept of a *Pluralistic Security Community* as forwarded by Czech Political Scientist Karl W. Deutch.[58] For obvious reasons, Deutch's theories of integration should be considered in any analysis of *Post-Imperium*. The distinction between *Amalgamation* (Hegemonic Regionalism) and *Integration* (Cooperative Regionalism) will be maintained in this paper, as well as the presumption that "the volume of transactions,

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[52] (Strauss, 1989, p. 83)
[53] (Garcia, 2020)
[54] (Millerman, 2024)
[55] (Garcia, 2020)
[56] (Hobbes, 1651, p. 11)
[57] (Kant, 1795, p. 143)
[58] (Deutsch, 1968, p. 22)

political, cultural, or economic, level throws a burden upon the institutions for peaceful adjustment or change among the participating populations".[59]

This focus on transactional relations links *Liberalism* to **Neofunctionalism**; the innovation of scholars such as David Mitrany and Ernst Haast.[60] Haast viewed *integration* as the shifting of loyalty and legitimacy from the state to "a new and larger centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states".[61] Such institutions would necessarily require acceptance by member states as being legitimate,[62] and thus were more likely to arise in regional settings due to shared geography and commercial interests.[63] Successful cooperation in one "crucial policy sector" would then "spill over" into wider cooperation; consequently increasing the legitimacy and empowering the capabilities of the regional organisation.[64] With the backing of integrated industrial and security concerns, norms develop at the leadership level – increasing the speed towards integration through the "socialisation" of elites.[65] Critics of *Neofunctionalism*, however, will raise the ambiguity of the term itself, the unintended impact of regional policy on members states, and the "democratic deficit" that emerges as a result of elite socialisation and an alien bureaucracy.[66]

In light of concerns arising from this state-led approach to integration arises the concept of **Complex Interdependence**. Developed by Drs Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Complex Interdependence* attempts to reconcile *Realism*'s presumptions about the nature of the international system with *Liberalism*'s presumptions about human nature.[67] As such, whilst Keohane and Nye view the international system in *Realist* terms as a Darwinistic struggle between states – wherein issues are hierarchical and force is a consideration – they

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[59] (Deutsch, 1954, p. 39)
[60] Note that Mitrany was a "Functionalist" and, unlike Haast, did not propose a methodology of integration.
[61] (Haast, 1961, p. 366)
[62] And a respect for the Rule of Law.
[63] (Haast, 1961, p. 377)
[64] (Haast, 1958, p. 454)
[65] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 109)
[66] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 110)
[67] (Cohen, 2008, p. 27)

nonetheless emphasise cooperation at sub-state levels, which they view as being an increasingly emergent factor; "Politics does not stop at the waters' edge".[68]

Under such conditions, the State diminishes in importance and instead is outpaced by transnational non-state actors.[69] The mutual benefits of cooperation between states at a sub-state level renders the use of force increasingly unpopular as a matter of foreign policy.[70] Institutions made to moderate disputes at this level, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have the effect of setting norms for inter-state behaviour.[71] Thus, the school of *Neoliberalism*, and *Liberal Institutionalism* in particular, are often seen dominant in their explanatory power for phenomena such as the emergence of the European Union. Indeed, the interlocking of Commercial interests in the European Coal and Steel Community did guarantee a degree of *Neo-Functionalist State Cooperation* on other matters, but it would be folly to ignore the other explanations for Union – namely the *Realist* interest in collective security and the *Constructivist* view of Europe as a "family".[72]

So what is **Neoliberalism**? In short, is an attempt to answer the question: "Under what conditions are states facing globalization willing to share their authority with multilateral organizations over whose policies they exert only indirect and collective influence?".[73] *Institutionalists* such as Brigid Laffan and William Richard Scott,[74] suggest a three-pillar approach to legitimacy – the regulatory, the normative and the cognitive.[75] The Regulatory dimension of legitimacy arises from the reduced transaction costs and the added security of a mutually accepted legal framework. Whilst Laffan initially envisioned such as merely being "Treaties and Laws" – Su has since expanded on the framework to include "Legal and Institutional" sub-dimensions.[76] The Normative dimension, according to Laffan, arises from the emergent values and norms that empower the laws to "operate from a logic of

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[68] (Keohane & Nye, 1973, p. 20)
[69] (Keohane & Nye, 1973, p. 158)
[70] (Rana, 2015, p. 290)
[71] (Cohen, 2008, p. 30)
[72] (Su, 2010, p. 31)
[73] (Keohane, 2020, p. 1)
[74] See (Laffan, 2001), (Scott, 2013).
[75] (Su, 2004, p. 357)
[76] (Laffan, 2001, p. 711)

appropriateness [and morality] rather than instrumentality".[77] Finally, the cognitive dimension encompasses the symbolic and *identitarian* bases of legitimacy – the *Stātus Vulgāris* or so to speak.[78] Dr Hongdah Su (discussed below) remains sceptical of this framework – viewing the initial formation of the European Union as more appropriately explained by *Neo-Realist* paradigms rather than the *Neo-Liberal*.[79] For this reason, it is important to emphasise *Neo-Realism*'s explanatory power in interstate relations.

Neorealism, or *Structural Realism*, accepts the conditional presumptions of *Neoliberalism*, but maintains that such necessary emerges out of an anarchical international system.[80] Likewise, it departs from *Classical Realism* by tracing the origins of conflict not to domestic factors, but rather to structural phenomena such as the *Security Dilemma*.[81] As such, *Neorealism* should be distinguished form *Classical Realism* in its motivational origins; viewing the unification of Europe as the work of powerful leaders (such as Charles De Gaulle) rather than structural phenomena.[82] Keeping in this structural focus as it applies to Russia's influence in Central Asia; *Neorealists* such as Dr Robert Gilpen and John Herz are necessary inclusions. Gilpin's view of *Systemic Change*, that is "the shift in identity of predominant powers, usually after a systemic war",[83] will be maintained for obvious reasons.[84] For Herz's part, an understanding of the *Security Dilemma* is a necessity in charting the emergence of a new interstate order.[85] As mentioned earlier, with regard to the *Interdependence* of Keohane and Nye, Stephen Krasner's view of such being subordinate sovereignty has a particularly interrogative power.[86] As such, the emergence of a regional order in Central Asia will likewise need to be able to be explained with reference to *Neorealist* presumptions.

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[77] (Laffan, 2001, p. 714)
[78] (Su, 2004, p. 359)
[79] (Su, 2010, p. 61)
[80] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 26)
[81] (Joseph, 2014, p. 3142)
[82] (Su, 2010, p. 53)
[83] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 28)
[84] (Gilpin, 1981, p. 11)
[85] For more, see (Herz, 1973)
[86] (Krasner, 2001, p. 239)

This thesis, regretfully, will be excluding the majority of second-order theories from analysis. Whilst an analysis of the epistemology of theorising itself is important – the structure and limits of this work prevent the application of such at the level required.[87] The reason for this is simple, as put by Dr Stirling-Folker in her article *Birds of a Feather?*; "when constructivism has been utilized as an explanation for change and transformation, it has tended to reach many of the same conclusions, and in the same manner, as other variants of liberal IR theory".[88] Seeing the fragmentation of International Relations theory as *ipso facto* anarchic, Stirling-Folker points to Dr Miles Kahler's own explanation as the prioritisation of such necessarily being the result of historical anomalies.[89] As such, the versatility of *Liberalism*, and its willingness to adopt new approaches under the same banner, has made it the school of choice for many pioneers in International Theory.[90] Yet a post-modern analysis of the epistemology itself would render questionable the very basis of theoretical development in the 20th Century. For instance, does America's liberal "social milieu" even provide for the extrapolation of non-liberal paradigms?[91] Such questions, as posed by Ole Wæver, clearly necessitate further investigation – a want that has prompted the formation of schools of theory such as *Constructivism* and *Critical Theory* in recent decades.[92]

Constructivist Alexander Wendt's observation on the socially constructed nature of the very objects of analysis.[93] If the core of a state is intersubjective, then ergo "state interests" must arise through the same process and do not emerge exogenously.[94] As international norms are formed by state behaviour, it follows that norms are thus not fixed and remain equally intersubjective.[95] As stated by Christian Reus-Smit;

> "historically different international societies, in which different ideals of legitimate
> statehood prevailed, have developed different institutional orders, with multilateral

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[87] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 173)
[88] (Stirling-Folker, 2000, p. 97)
[89] (Kahler, 1997, p. 20)
[90] (Stirling-Folker, 2000, p. 115)
[91] (Waever, 1998, p. 721)
[92] (Waever, 1998, p. 723)
[93] (Wendt, 1996, p. 47)
[94] (Wendt, 1994, p. 384)
[95] (Reus-Smit, 1998, p. 259)

diplomacy and contractual international law only emerging in a world where liberal states, and their principles of governance, have been ascendent".[96]

Is there an alternative system of interstate norms emergent in Central Asia? This thesis will maintain that there is a potential for significant work to be done on this subject; the to-be-explored *Steppe Tradition* having generated a socio-political framework within which Central Asian states can resolve their disputes in exclusion of the norms of *Liberal* governance. Such presumptions, which shall be viewed as also forming the basis of Russian governance necessarily operate in opposition to the *Liberal Tradition*, which emerged out of Westphalian Sovereignty and was not "successfully exported" to Russia through colonial ventures or conquest by Western States.[97]

A critique of the hegemony of liberal governance underlines the **Critical Theory** presumption that "[International Relations] Theory is always for someone and for some purpose" should be considered in a similar light.[98] Ideas themselves are, per Antonio Gramsci and Robert Cox, subject to influence from the "hegemonic rule" of a particular ideology.[99] As such, whilst international trade may be negotiated by any number of states – the manner and object of negotiation is itself ideologically compromised. As applied to our concept of *Imperial Order* [see Part 2.1], the order itself resembles the "sturdy system of fortresses" that remains standing even after the Empire itself has crumbled.[100] Such could be said about the very conception of Central Asia as a backyard of major empires – a view made manifest by the flow of capital through the region, and a consequence itself of Central Asia's geopolitics.[101] Returning to the problem raised by Wæver in *A Not so International Discipline*, other second theorists such as Hamid Dabashi have note that concepts and theories are, themselves, subject to selection by intersubjective means.[102] The consequence of this is that the current paradigm of debates itself can only loosely apply to contexts beyond its origin. In other words, to analyse Central Asia, it takes an

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[96] (Reus-Smit, 2002, p. 503)
[97] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 12)
[98] (Cox, 1981, p. 128)
[99] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 188)
[100] (Hoare & Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 238)
[101] (Adiong, et al., 2019, p. 125)
[102] (Dabashi, 2013)

understanding of variations in importance not only in the objects of analysis, but the tools of analysis themselves.

A product of such intrasubjective analysis is emergent schools of International Relations Theory such as **Islamic Geopolitics**.[103] With its origins in the wider **Postcolonial** tradition, *Islamic Geopolitics* seeks to reconcile Islamic conceptions of territoriality with the modern nation state.[104] In particular, *Islamic Geopolitics* focuses on the territoriality of Islamic rule itself – from the nature of the *Ummah* as a universal community of believers, to the jurisprudence regarding the *Diyar*.[105] Even beyond the scope of Islamic Scholarship, IR Theorists are familiar with the duality of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*.[106] Having been introduced into the international lexicon by various jihadist projects, the basic understanding is that the former represents areas under an established Islamic rule, while the latter represents areas permanently "at war" with Islam, and thus needing to be vanquished.[107] That said, whilst those two *Diyar* represent the normative framework for all Muslims, various *Madhahib* (schools of Islamic jurisprudence) have expanded upon the basic framework in order to recognise various polities within the borders and periphery of Caliphal lands.[108]

Through *ijtihad*,[109] scholars – in particular of the *Hanafi Madhab* – responded to the realities of the changing landscape; the fragmentation of the Caliphate into various independent polities, and the occupation of Islamic lands by the Crusader States.[110] In doing so, they expanded the existing dyad to include a plethora of terms to describe the new reality – these terms have been formally typified by modern theorists such as Jason E. Stakes.[111] Key terms for the purposes of this analysis include the *Dar al-Adl* ("non-Muslim territories that enforce sharia"), the *Dar al-Amn* ("those that protect the rights of Muslims"), *Dar al-Shirk* ("those that superficially practice Islam") and the *Dar al-Riddah*

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[103] (Adiong, et al., 2019, p. 283)
[104] (Abo-Kazleh, 2006, p. 41)
[105] (Ahmed, 2008, p. 5)
[106] (Lafraie, 2012, p. 10)
[107] (Bouzenita, 2007, p. 1568)
[108] (Parvin & Sommer, 1980, p. 2)
[109] Independent reasoning.
[110] (Silverstein, 2009, p. 110)
[111] (Adiong, et al., 2019, p. 282)

("those that have converted away from Islam").[112] This typology, and its implications for Central Asian Security, will be further explored in **Part 4.10**.

The view that intergovernmental interactions and institutional development are subject to normative pressures is the focus of *Liberal-Institutionalist* Dr. Hongdah Su's work *The European Dream and Reluctant Integration in the 21st Century*.[113] Analysing European Integration, Dr. Su's proposes that the European Union is the consequence of an *Institutionalist* and *Constructivist* "Dream" – a vision (paradigm) of interstate relations emboldened by the need to avoid a return to past trauma.[114] Su charts the evolution of Europe's dominant paradigms from the period immediately after the peace of Westphilia to the modern day.[115] The *Dream* paradigm has, according to Su, has remained resilient – even in the face of threats such as the Eurozone Debt Crisis.[116] The dominant factor in this resilience is played by "normative pressures"; the expansion into the post-Soviet States could neither be deferred nor ignored, lest it brought the ideational conception of a unified Europe into question.[117] The result of this resilience is the development of what Dr Su calls the "Reluctant Runners Model" – a phenomenon by which European Expansion, empowered by the normative pressures, resulted in the deepening of pre-existing ties within the union as existing member states increased interaction.[118]

In a departure from Keohane and Nye, Dr Su proposes that economic integration doesn't necessarily correlate to political integration. On the contrary, political integration emerges in response to "integrating forces" and "critical events" that undermined the preference of a territorial and political status quo.[119] In doing so, Dr Su recognises the *Realist* motivations for European integration – that of "join or die" – yet notes that *Realism* fails to account for the power of values, norms, or identity.[120] Whilst Dr Su's work has mostly

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[112] (Adiong, et al., 2019, p. 283)
[113] The author notes the great assistance of Dr. Su throught the duration of their research in Asia.
[114] (Su, 2020, p. xxiv)
[115] (Su, 2020, p. xxv)
[116] (Walker A. , 2018)
[117] (Su, 2020, p. 21)
[118] (Su, 2020, p. 25)
[119] (Su, 2020, p. 397)
[120] (Su, 2010, p. 31)

focused on Europe, East Asia and Southeast Asia – there is not necessarily any reason that the same framework cannot be applied to an emergent order in Central Asia – a *Turanic Dream*, if you will – represented by a body such as the *Organisation of Turkic States*.[121] Such seems like a pipedream given Central Asia's current political landscape – yet there is no *intrinsic* reason why the OTS cannot achieve the same level of legitimacy in the *domos*.

With so many schools of thought potentially applicable to the analysis of Central Asian Geopolitics, the task of constructing a multi-disciplinary analysis seems beyond the realm of possibility. Nonetheless, the cross-application of existing theories, where applicable, will provide a workable paradigm. This thesis remains predominantly focused on the "Dream" model of Dr Hongdah Su's *Liberal Institutionalism*; yet it would be a gross oversimplification to ignore the potential role played by *Realism* in the formation of a regional "understanding" separate from Russia. Likewise, the *Steppe Tradition* of Central Asian governance continue to inform identity – playing a significant role in the behaviour of the states themselves; a constructivist preposition.

As such while this paper will mostly apply *Institutionalist* assumptions where appropriate, it will also seek to explain the unfolding phenomena with reference to other schools. This will be particularly apparent in the final section of this Thesis. Having introduced the toolset of analysis, the following chapter will seek to narrow down the scope of this paper by disambiguating the terms used – particularly, the concept of "Empire" and if it is correct to refer to Russia's dominance of Central Asia as being such. If so, then why did typical theories of Imperial collapse, such as that of Alexander Motyl, fail to predict Russia's survival as a Great Power? Such will be explored in extensive detail.

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[121] (Purton, 2022, p. 1)

2. The Nature of Empire and its Components

Russia's status as a political actor has often eluded categorisation. In assessing the Kremlin's rule over both *Russia Proper* and its *near-abroad* however, it is necessary to make appropriately define the use of terminology. Throughout Russia's history, its core territory, known as the *Great Rus'*,[122] has been variously described as a *Principality, Tsardom, Empire, Republic, Socialist Union State* and finally, the current *Russian Federation*, in both its pre- and post-1993 forms.[123] In the latter case, as with the frameworks of Russia's near abroad – the Kremlin's description of the status quo may not fit that of an external observer.[124] That said, Russia's *near-abroad* has likewise been managed according to several paradigms –the *Bašqaqism* of the late Grand Duchy, the *Crusader Orthodoxy* of the Tsardom of Russia, the *Dynastic Imperialism* of the Empire, the *World Revolution* and *Collective Defence* of its Soviet Successor State(s), and, contemporarily, the *Democratic Nationalism* and later *Pragmatic Eurasianism* of the Russian Federation.[125]

In each of these cases, the language used to describe both the status of Russia Proper and its *near-abroad* has differed according to the ideological ambitions of the Kremlin.[126] Likewise, the semantic classification of Russia's previous diplomatic paradigms is necessary in order to chart their evolution and decay, even in Steppe Empires– the subject of this paper. As noted by Kremlinologist David W. Paul:

> "…Ideology often yields in the policy process to other forces… Yet the pervasiveness of [Russia's ideology] continues to make it a factor demanding analysis. Ideology serves, at the minimum, to justify foreign policy and, at the maximum, as a general guide to decision-making…"[127]

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[122] In Russian this is rendered as Великая Русь (Velikaya Rus)
[123] I will argue in Part [4.7] that the events of 1993 saw a dramatic reimposition of pre-Federation institutions under the guise of "constitutional reformation"
[124] See for example, the rolling back of Federal Institutions in Russia at (Smirnova, 2017).
[125] (Hirsh, 2022)
[126] (Shuster, 2013)
[127] (Paul, 1971, p. 165)

That said, whilst the *Endogenous* nature of Russia's status is important for the functional nature of policy and its justification – the descriptive nature of the Kremlin's "political order" is better established in *Exogeneity*.[128] By holding Russia to the *Platonian Ideal-Type* of an "Empire", it can be compared with other Empires that similarly share such façades. Any divergence between the two should then be explained with reference to the *Endogenous* nature.

Whilst this paper is a geopolitical study, and linguistics is not the subject of study – it is nonetheless important to address necessary concepts as to avoid ambiguity. For this reason, this chapter will, at times, depart from the comfort of first presumptions and delve into the realm of the pedantic. Yet, such is unfortunately necessary - concepts such as *Polity, State, Nation* and *Empire* are so commonly applied in general discourse that their meaning is stretched beyond the cohesion necessary for this analysis. If this paper is to analyse Russia as a "*Steppe Empire*", then it must begin by first defining what an *Empire* is, and how it differs from a *State*. By defining Russia (and the Soviet Union) as an *Empire*, other tools of analysis – such as Alexander Motyl's theory of Imperial Decline – can be included in our analysis of the Russian Imperium.

2.1 On Empire

By far the most common term used to describe Moscow's historic control over its *near-abroad* is "Empire". Yet, this term is problematic at the best of times, with Scottish Historian Sir Charles Harding Firth noting "Each new shade of meaning it acquired sprang out of the political conditions of a particular moment".[129] Was the Soviet Union, for example, an Empire? *Prima Facie*, the Soviet government's support for anti-Imperialist movements in the so-called "Third World" would negate such a presumption.[130] After all, since 1916, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had maintained that "Imperialism [was] the highest stage of Capitalism".[131] Critics are quick to point out, however, that the Bolshevik government was quick to adopt the policies of the Tsarist regime vis-à-vis Russia's near-abroad – with one observer declaring in 1929 that "…the programme of [Tsarist officer] General Kuropatkin as far as [such territories] are concerned, was completed by Red methods".[132] Nonetheless, beyond the pejorative references to Stalin as a "Red Emperor", the Soviet Union lacked an Emperor.[133] Yet, does an Emperor make an Empire?

The term itself, derived from the Latin *Imperare* "to command", was initially reserved for Roman commanders who were granted *Imperium*, or absolute political authority, over foreign military expeditions, or "*Provinciae*".[134] As the Roman Republic expanded beyond Italy in the 3rd Century BC, it preserved its Republican institutions within the *Domi* (Domestic Territories), whilst making exceptions to such rules within the *Militiae* (Frontier).[135] Within the *Domi*, the rights and privileges of the citizenry were preserved; a status quo that differed greatly from the *Militiae*, wherein military leaders, assigned *Provinciae*, wielded *Imperium*.[136] This distinction shares notable similarities to other forms of dual administration, including those which emerged in the *Steppe Tradition* and the *Islamic Tradition* of Geopolitics.[137]

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[129] (Firth, 1918, p. 185)
[130] (Scalapino, 1964, p. 640)
[131] (Lenin, 1916, p. 265)
[132] (Lobanov-Rostovsky, 1929, p. 45)
[133] A trend that continues to this day, see (Montefiore, 2010, p. 46).
[134] (Syme, 1958, p. 173)
[135] (Drogula, 2015, p. 47)
[136] (Boardman, et al., 1982, p. 564)
[137] (Shaybānī, 1966, p. 130)

Initially, such *Provinciae* were offensive assignments, and did not carry administrative capacity. Following the First Punic War (264–241 BC), however, the geopolitical necessity of maintaining Sicily led to the establishment of a permanent defensive *Provincia* on the island in 240 BC.[138] The reasons for this were twofold; on one hand, Sicily was located off the Italian mainland and therefore represented a specific circumstance in which the reversion of a territory to *Domi* would not make sense. Such issues caused by Sicily's distance from the metropole were exaggerated further by the fact that Sicily possessed a Greek majority who were well aware of their *Sikeliot* identity as separate from that of the Italian peninsula.[139] Nonetheless, the lack of a real military campaign on the Island meant that the *Imperium* was granted to a civic *Praetor* rather than a military *Consul*.[140]

As the system of permanent and defensive *Provinciae* was expanded across the Roman periphery, the Roman government sought to prevent abuses of *Imperium*. The passage of the *Leges Porciae* in 100BC stripped the *Imperium* of Praetorian governors of its martial capacity and expanded its governing capacity.[141] Subsequently, *Provincia* gradually came to refer to *Imperium* over permanent territorial divisions within the *Militiae*, and then eventually to the territorial units themselves.[142] Such *Provinciae* could then, in turn, be granted to a single *Imperator* – something that was first achieved under Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus with the passage of the anti-piracy *Lex Gabinia* in 67BC.[143]

With the reorganisation of the *Imperium Romanum*, under *Caesar* Augustus in 27BC, the *Imperator* became an established institution for the remainder of the Empire.[144] With Diocletian's reforms in 293AD, the system was expanded to include the titles of *Augustus* (incumbent) and *Caesare* (inheritor).[145] The latter of these titles, *Caesar*, found some use in the Holy Roman Empire and its modern successor states of the German and Austrian

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[138] (Drogula, 2015, p. 245)
[139] (Prag, 2011, p. 89)
[140] (Drogula, 2015, p. 234)
[141] (Boardman, et al., 1982)
[142] (Duncan, 2018, p. 62)
[143] (Flower, 2004, p. 99)
[144] (Eck, 1998, p. 159)
[145] (Barnes, 1982, p. 199)

Empires.[146] It was, however, more heavily tied to the Byzantine world, where it eventually came to represent the *highest authority* in the *multi-ethnic empires* of the Ottomans, Persians, Murghals and Russians.[147]

Whilst this pattern of evolution could be applied to the historical Empires of the East, the Old Chinese Term 皇帝 (*Huáng-dì*)[148] is arguably distinct from *Emperor*, with the proper translation being closer to the ecclesiastical role of a "Heavenly Sovereign", similar to a Pope in the West.[149] That said, it is incorrect to presume that European Empires were devoid of such a functionary.[150] After all, even in the case of the Western Emperors, the title also carried an ecclesiastical use, with the Holy Roman Emperor the sole title reserved for the Sovereign of all Catholic lands, below which ruled the individual *Kings*.[151] The Emperor, in theory, possessed the highest secular authority within the Christian realm – and indeed did so until the *Investiture Controversy* of the 11th Century.[152] The outcome of the power struggle between the Church and the Imperial State saw the growth of *Ducal* and *Royal* authority as lower level statesmen asserted their *de facto* independence against the Emperor.[153] Notably, in the Orthodox world, such a transformation did not occur.

These changes are, thus, political rather than merely ecclesiastical. It was *partly* in recognition of the loss of the Byzantine Emperor as the global Orthodox Sovereign that Ivan IV transformed the Grand Principality of Moscow into the Tsardom of Russia – an Orthodox Emperor for the Orthodox Christian world.[154] That said, Ivan IV was as much motivated by an appeal to Orthodox Christianity as he was motivated by an appeal to an existing imperial order established by the Mongols – of which the nascent Russian State was an inheritor.[155]

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[146] (Dawson, 2018, p. 355)
[147] (Imozemtsev, 2017, p. 26)
[148] 皇帝 – "Emperor" according to the Chinese Electronic Dictionary Project (CEDICT).
[149] (Nadeau, 2012, p. 54)
[150] (Schirato, 1994, p. 48)
[151] (Wortman, 1905, p. 19)
[152] See for example (McBrien, 1997, pp. 130-145), the Emperor presided over even the appointment of Popes.
[153] (Strayer & Munro, 1970, p. 216)
[154] (Madariaga, 2014, p. 36)
[155] (Longworth, 2005, p. 211)

The later translation of Tsardom into *Empire* under Peter the Great was motivated primarily by the need to establish Russia amongst the growing Colonial European regimes of the day – a matter of "Europeanisation" in an appeal against Russia's "Asiatic" characterisation by other European Powers.[156] Semantic refashioning in pursuit of foreign policy objectives is not uncommon in this regard - the proclamation of the Korean Empire in 1897 was a reassertion of independence in recognition of the dangers of remaining a tributary of the declining Qing dynasty.[157] Likewise, in repudiation of the Holy Roman Emperor's claim to absolute authority within the Christian lands, Napoleon Bonaparte declared himself *Emperor of the French* on the 2nd of December, 1804 – shifting the subject of *Imperium* from Christians generally to *the French Nation*.[158]

This isn't to suggest that either term had no prior usage. Whilst modern scholarship has often settled on the French Revolution of 1789 as heralding birth of *Nationalism* and *Imperialism*, this has increasingly come into question in later analyses of polities that operated as a national body well before the Revolutionary Era.[159] With regard to *Empire*, the Kingdom of England had claimed *Imperium contra Papam* since the passage of the *Ecclesiastical Appeals Act (1532)* in which "it is manifestly declared and expressed, that this realm of England is an Empire [to the exclusion of the Catholic Church and its Emperor]".[160] Yet a non-ecclesial use of *Empire* is also evident as early as 1603, wherein it was proposed that the *Union of Crowns* create the "Empire of Great Britain".[161] Nonetheless, British Monarchs continued to style themselves as merely *Rex/Regina*, even well after "The British Empire" had entered popular lexicon.[162]

Consequential to this trend, Napoleon's coronation of 1804, as in the case of other aspects of the nascent French government, was an exercise in *formalisation*.[163] The French colonial possessions, having been haphazardly assembled for almost two centuries, had been run

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[156] (Hughes, 2002, p. 210)
[157] (Yi, 2012, p. 189)
[158] (Robinson & Beard, 1908, p. 334)
[159] (Lavezzo, 2004, p. ix)
[160] (Elton, 1982, p. 341)
[161] (Pollard, 1966, p. 148)
[162] (Adams, 1922, p. 485)
[163] (Dwyer, 2013, p. 214)

according to a patchwork of laws and jurisdictions.[164] Citing "the differences in habits, worries and interests", Napoleon declared in Article 91 of the *Constitution of the Year VIII* that the Colonies were to be governed by "special laws".[165] As such, the ascendancy of Napoleon to the French throne simultaneously codified his enlightened-absolutist regime as a *national-imperial* government and defined that which stood beyond the metropole as *Imperium.*[166] Such changes "situate[d] the empire outside the law of nations", confirming a transition that had been taking place within European colonial systems since the mid-17th Century.[167] Thus, in the age of *New Imperialism*, which began with the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, "Empire", restored to its original meaning, was once again the international paradigm.[168]

In the years falling the Napoleonic ascendency, Empires emerged in the Austrian Realm (1804), Mexico (1822), Brazil (1822), British India (1858), the German States (1866) and Ethiopia (1878).[169] Each of these instances saw the unification of numerous ethnically or administratively distinct polities under a single sovereign polity. Thus, *Empire* came to reflect its current usage, that is, "[a polity] … which rules over territories outside its original borders… [possessing] a central power or core territory – whose inhabitants form the dominant ethnic group in the entire system".[170] Alternatively, the core territory can remain ethnically heterogenous - with Empire understood as *an order imposed by one polity on a number of subordinate polities, which are in turn governed with distinction from the Metropole.*[171] This order, necessarily, is arranged according to heterogenous contracting, wherein *each relationship of dominance between the Metropole and its various component parts is constructed according to the conditions whereby the ruler incorporated the ruled.*[172] Such heterogenous contracting takes the form of a "a hublike structure", and can be described as being a wheel (in the case of formal empires) or a

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[164] (Lareau, 1888, p. 244)
[165] (Røge, 2019, p. 230)
[166] (Covo & Maruschke, 2021, p. 371)
[167] (Spieler, 2009, p. 365)
[168] (Redouane, 1990, p. 14)
[169] (Pereira, 2020, p. 16)
[170] (Howe, 2002, p. 14)
[171] (Madariaga, 2014, p. 34)
[172] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 94)

"rimless wheel" in the case of the informal.[173] This definition, which shares a common semantic root with the original Roman conception of rulership abroad, will be utilised for the remainder of this paper.

Seen in this light, the Soviet Union would indeed be considered an Empire – a position first established by Olaf Caroe in 1953, and increasingly supported by modern scholarship.[174] At its height, the Soviet Union controlled a series of "core" territories, but maintained an informal position of rulership in Eastern Europe – itself a geopolitical fiction maintained by the Soviet Empire.[175] Such fictions required moral enforcement, and in the ecclesiastical sense, the Soviet Politburo seems adopted the *Universal Rulership* of the Byzantine Empire, as noted by George Keenan;

> "the position of Moscow as the 'third Rome' of international communism is essential to the carefully cultivated Soviet image of self. Take it away, and the whole contrived history of Soviet Communism, its whole rationale and sense of legitimacy, is threatened."[176]

Thus, as explained in Part 4.12, the erosion of the Soviet myth of liberation left the Soviet Empire with even less justifications for existence than its Tsarist predecessor.[177] Thus, it is necessary to include *Liberal* Michael Doyle's work on the concept – which begins with a criticism of its ambiguity and ends with the prospective definition of "a relationship, *formal or informal*, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another".[178]

Key here is what Charles Maier refers to as the horizontal and vertical domination – that is, the centre rules the periphery (horizontal) but does so through force wielded by an elite in the centre itself (vertical).[179] Such differs *Empires* from *Federations* or *Confederations*,

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173 (Motyl, 2001, p. 4)
174 (Caroe, 1953)
175 (Applebaum, 2013)
176 (Keenan, 1972, p. 10)
177 (Lieven, 1993, p. 222)
178 (Doyle, 1986, p. 45)
179 (Maier, 2009, p. 7)

which are typically characterised by a weaker federal government (vis-à-vis the periphery) which is ruled not by a hereditary or autocratic elite, but by a bureaucratic class elected or nominated by the periphery itself.[180] Whilst Russia is defined in Article 1 of *The Constitution of the Russian Federation* as being "a democratic federal law-bound State with a republican form of government";[181] it should be noted (as expanded on in Part 5.1) that since 1993, the Kremlin has taken several measures to centralise its rule in its federal subjects.

Doyle's inclusion of Informal Empires is also key– as it is the position of this paper that Moscow rules over both a formal and an informal Empire. The former, as argued in Part 5.1, refers to the territories that are part of the internationally recognised Russian territory, yet exist beyond the heartland of European Russia.[182] The latter, which includes Russia's actions in Central Asia, but also throughout Africa and the Middle East, falls into a long list of arrangements whereby "one nation's elite or government exerted extraterritorial legal control [or] de facto economic domination, [in order to] strongly influence policies in a foreign country critical to the more powerful country's interests".[183] Notably in this evaluation is the orientation of the peripheral state towards "the interest of an external patron rather than the state and its population".[184]

Gerring et al. explore the difference between Informal and Formal Empires in *An Institutional Theory of Direct And Indirect Rule*, nothing that "While direct rule may rest on coercion, indirect rule requires bargaining. To be sure, it is a bargaining situation in which holds most of the cards. Even so, B's leaders always have […] option[s]".[185] Bargaining requires leverage, suggesting that "the maintenance of formal legal sovereignty [pre- and post-annexation] [depends], in part, on the existence [or survival] of a minimal level of political development".[186] The paper goes on compare the *modus operandi* of the US forces in Iraq proper vis-à-vis Iraqi Kurdistan in the north, concluding that Kurdistan

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[180] (O'Leary, 2013)
[181] See (The Government of The Russian Federation, 1993).
[182] See Part 1.2 for the definition of an "informal empire".
[183] (Barton & Bennett, 2010, p. 67)
[184] (Doboš & Purton, 2023, p. 3)
[185] (Gerring, et al., 2011, p. 385)
[186] (Gerring, et al., 2011, p. 411)

"already possessed institutionalised system of rule, while government functions in the south were destroyed by the conquest".[187] Picking up where Gerring et al. left off, this paper will argue that differing institutional development, grounded in a territorial tradition, perhaps plays the biggest role in the differing trajectories of the former Moscovite posessions of the Baltic States, Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

For the purposes of this paper, *Imperial Order* is defined in *Doylist* terms[188] as being the lasting *institutions* of Empire themselves – that is "the formal and informal rules, practices, and regularities at both the domestic and international level that guide and constrain political choices and activities".[189] The precise means by which institutions emerge remains open to debate, with various theories emphasising cultural,[190] geographical,[191] or transactional factors.[192] For the purposes of this paper, I have settled on geography as being the most dominant (but not solely responsible) factor. The reason for this is that geography has a "gatekeeping effect" on the derivation of institutions through other means.

The problem of *Midnight Sun / Polar Night* in the Arctic, for example, limits the practicing of cultural and religious norms developed in the Arabian Peninsula.[193] Likewise, attempts to transplant western parliamentary structures – which developed in line with social individualism – onto the patrimonial and clan-dominant societies of Melanesia have similarly resulted in "chaos".[194] In such cases, "excessive heterogeneity" and a plurality of pre-existing traditions means that one size does not fit all, and politics is thus conducted in

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[187] (Gerring, et al., 2011, p. 412)
[188] Both referring to the aforementioned Michael Doyle, as well as the more widely applied usage in media analysis, that is "From a real-world perspective; of or relating to an explanation outside the text; external to the narrative". See (Aviv, 2020).
[189] (Aldrich, et al., 2020)
[190] See (Christiansen & Richerson, 2024, p. i); "cultural evolution can provide an important integrating function across the various disciplines of the human sciences, as organic evolution does for biology."
[191] See (Landes, 2015, p. 2); "The answers are found not only in the large forces at work in economies: geography, religion, the broad swings of politics, but also in the small surprising details."
[192] See (North, 1990, p. 1); "Institutions exist… due to the uncertainties involved in human interaction; they are the constraints devised to structure that interaction."
[193] See (Kassam, 2016); "for the small but growing Muslim community of Iqaluit, Nunavut, life in the land of the midnight sun poses a singular challenge during the month of Ramadan, during which Muslims typically fast from sunrise to sunset."
[194] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 15)

an "official" and parliamentarian capacity, and a local capacity.[195] The result is the persistence of a "legal pluralism and pre-existing social structures centred around a bigman" – a traditional communal leader.[196]

Important for any discussion of institutions is their inherent staying-power. Per Fukuyama, "Human institutions are "sticky"; that is, they persist over time and are changed only with great difficulty".[197] So resilient are such behavioural patterns, that they can persist long after their origin has faded from the map. Thus, wherein the institutions of rule remain across a defined geographical area, a *Post-Imperial Order* remains in place. The best example of a lasting *Post-Imperial Order* is that of the *Pax Mongolica,* which survived almost a century after the dissolution of the Empire into its component parts. The untimely death of Möngke Khan in 1259 kicked off a succession struggle which ultimately resulted in the Empire fracturing into four separate Khanates.[198] Seemingly, such would be viewed as the "End" of the Mongolian Empire, and indeed, in the view of popular historiography, it is.

Yet the dust had settled, the *Imperial Order* of the Mongols remained in place. The successor states – the Yuan Dynasty (Dai Ön *Ulus*), the Chagatai Khanate (Dumdadu Mongol *Ulus*), the Ilkhanate (*Hülegü Ulus*), and the Golden Horde (*Ulug Ulus*) – all continued to form part of a wider political environment, leading some to question if the Mongol Empire had dissolved at all.[199] Such was helped in part by the particular way in which the Mongol Empire – an all Steppe Empires – break down, with an emphasis on lineages rather than geographical spaces. Indeed, only the Yuan Dynasty found itself bound by an increasing pressure to *sedentarize*.[200] The transformation of Steppe polities into Sedentary states covered in Part 3.5.

So sturdy were the institutions of the Mongolian order, that the *Pax Mongolica* emerged not in the period of unification, but in the *Post-Imperial Order* of the early 14th Century

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[195] (Fraenkel, 2014, p. 5)
[196] (Smith, 2017, p. 250)
[197] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 36)
[198] (Allsen, 1994, p. 413)
[199] (Favereau, 2021, p. 260)
[200] (Rogers, 2007, p. 249)

Mongol World.[201] It was not until the collapse of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China, which "signaled to subjects across the Mongol Empire that it was time to realize their own ambitions".[202] Even then, in the words of Jack Weatherford;

> "The new rulers hung on to the trappings and illusions of the old system to legitimize their own new rule. The facade of the Mongol Empire continued standing long after the internal structure had collapsed and the Mongols were all gone."[203]

Thus, any comprehensive explanation of an Empire should also be able to establish the motives, means and nature of the *Imperial Order* in question – with specific focus on the nature of peripheral submission or resistance and the nature of the International system at large.[204] With regard to the nature of peripheral submission; Imperial relations resemble "an incomplete wheel, with a hub and spokes but without the rim";[205] the imperial metropole being the only means via which relations between the *coloniae* can be maintained.

As such, an Imperial System can be conceived as a particular *informational ecosystem*, whereby events both internal and external to the system are understood according to the interpretation of the Metropole and the Metropole's ideological framework.[206] Wherein the legitimate authority of the Metropole wanes to the extent of not being able to control this *ecosystem*, the Imperial framework itself can be turned against the metropole. Such is the case in both Informal and Formal Empires. This is particularly evident in the post-war collapse of the French *Imperium* and its transformation into the *Post-Imperial Order* in Africa today.

French colonisation of Africa had, itself, begun with changes in the International System. The collapse of the congress of Vienna and a prolonged financial crisis had left European

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[201] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 425)
[202] (Favereau, 2021, p. 259)
[203] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 479)
[204] (Doyle, 1986, p. 88)
[205] (Motyl, 1999, p. 128)
[206] (Ruscio, 2004)

States with a the need to expand markets abroad. This led European states to circumvent the *Pax Britannia* and seek out new markets in the yet contestable territories in Africa; a venture made possible by industrialisation and new advancements in medicine.[207] This commercial mission was paired with a wider ideological mandate to "civilise the coloured folk" – a mandate that followed the expansion of commercial imperialism into Southeast Asia and Beyond.[208] Like pearls on a necklace, the colonies of France became interwoven into an overarching informational and cultural fabric.

Such was ultimately its weakness, with Maurice Genevoix noting that "it was taken for granted [in the rest of the Empire] that events in Indochina would be decisive… once the string is broken, all the pearls of the necklace fall off, one by one: the problem of the Empire is a single whole".[209] It was thus because of the imperial system that France was threatened with a multi-front war; the commonality of language and status made "comrades in a common cause" where there had previously been Vietnamese and Algerians. The Algerian War (1954-1962), which served as the harbinger of the end of the colonial order in Africa, began as a series of docker strikes out of solidarity for those in Indochina.[210]

Hearing of France's defeat in August 1945, the *Front de Libération Nationale Algérie* (FLN) immediately began preparations for the commencement of the Algerian War in November that year.[211] Likewise, in French Cameroon, news of the French defeat spurred the *Union of the Peoples of Cameroon* to take direct action, setting off a chain of events that ended French rule in Africa over the next 5 years.[212] The subsequent collapse of the European Empires in Africa was also a result of changes in the International System. French loses in the Algerian War and inability of the indebted United Kingdom to maintain its colonies under American pressure led to the "Winds of Change" realisation and the subsequent "Year of Africa" in 1960.[213]

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[207] (Griffiths, et al., 1999, p. 91)
[208] (Pakenham, 1991)
[209] (Despois, et al., 1955, p. 295)
[210] (Aggoun, 2005, p. 34)
[211] (Moïse, 2012)
[212] (Richard, 1986, p. 115)
[213] (Hemming, 1996, p. 97)

Just as in the case of the Mongols, however, the *Post-Imperial Order* remained – with anti-colonialist Sékou Touré of Guinea even requesting that Guinea be allowed to stay within the common monetary policy of the CFA Franc.[214] Whilst France ejected Guinea from the monetary union as punishment for independence, it nonetheless used the remaining institutions on the African continent to *partially reimperialize*, transforming the former French colonies into a dense network of institutional, semi-institutional and informal relations known today as *Françafrique*.[215] Thus, when Empires collapse, they do so at a systemic level, and it is the survival of those systems that ultimately allows for *reimperialization*.

Having discussed the means of Imperium, it is necessary to reflect on Imperial ends – what is the *Raison d'Être* of Empire? An immediate answer to this question would be as Immanuel Weis claims, namely that "the central purpose of Empire is expansion".[216] Yet expansion and growth (territorial or otherwise) is a variable objective of all social organisations, and is not limited to Empire alone.[217] On the contrary, Empires are often more than comfortable to maintain a profitable status quo – the commercial project of the Portuguese did so for almost 600 years (1415-1999).[218] For Portuguese policymakers, it was not necessary to expand territory beyond the network of trade outposts that they had achieved by the 16th Century. It was not until the Scramble for Africa in the 19th Century that questions of prestige motivated further acquisitions.[219] Likewise, the end of expansion does not signify decline – the Ottoman Empire had stopped expanding by the middle of the 16th Century, yet remained strong enough to "threaten Europe at the doors of Vienna" until the start of the 18th Century.[220]

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[214] (Eboulé, 2020)
[215] (Bovcon, 2011, p. 5)
[216] (Geiss, 1994, p. 33)
[217] (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 32)
[218] (Newitt, 2005, p. 15)
[219] Note cf. (Fage & Oliver, 1986, p. 353): Portuguese presence in West Africa had seen expansion in the 17th Century in direct response to Dutch incisions in the aftermath of Dutch independence. This was an exception more than a rule.
[220] (Barkey, 1994, p. 18)

The role of personal choice should not be overestimated. This doesn't mean that all Empires are, like the British Empire as described in the words of Sir John Seeley "[acquired] in a fit of absence of mind".[221] Rather, in the words of Alexander Motyl, "[there is] no logically or empirically identifiable point … at which such a choice could be contemplated and, least of all, made".[222] In most cases, the emergence of Empires is the result of shifts in the international system itself.

The aforementioned Sicilians, for example, had been drawn increasingly into Rome's orbit through the geoeconomics of the Mediterranean. The subsequent First Punic War (264–241 BC) – which began as the result of a Sicilian appeal to the rival empires of Carthage and Rome – both gave Rome the means (occupation) and the ends (the need to defend against Carthaginian irredentism) for the creation of a new "imperial" institutional system.[223] Thus the Romans were not moved by choice, but by circumstance, into constructing an Empire. That being said, the role of elite motivation should not be underestimated. States and Empires are still abstractions, at the centre of which sit people with private motivations.[224] Such motivations may lead to a disenfranchised elite embarking on a policy of *reimperialization*.

Whilst this paper will cover Alexander Motyl's theory of *reimperialisation*, it is worth nothing first that such a process is arguably no different to the restoration of state sovereignty over a territory – it is something grounded in institutional legacy and ultimately self-justifying. For that reason, it is important to examine State Formation when discussing empires.

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[221] (Dicey, 1951, p. 261)
[222] (Motyl, 2001, p. 33)
[223] (Guidetti, 2004, p. 322)
[224] (Motyl, 2001, p. 33)

2.2 On the Nation, the State, Imperial Order and Imperial Collapse

As outlined in the introduction to this section – the categorisation of the War in Ukraine as an *Anti-Imperial War* brings with it many implications for analysis. Having established what an Empire is, this chapter will assess the concept of *Imperial Order*, with a focus on *Imperial Collapse* and *Secessionism*.

The decline and collapse of Imperial Systems has long been a subject of interest in academia.[225] As noted by historian Glen W. Bowersock in *The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome*, "we have been obsessed with the fall: it has been valued as an archetype for every perceived decline, and, hence, as a symbol for our own fears".[226] The disintegration of Rome has been studied *ad nauseum* – every new pet-theory tends to fall into one of six categories; *Political, Economic, Military, Social, Religious and Environmental*.[227] Yet these factors, archetypical of the sinew that holds together all empires, are part of any imperial system, and mirror those raised by John Glubb *Pasha* in *The Fate of Empires and the Search for Survival*.[228] Amongst these factors, the single most important is the *Political* – the delegitimization of the *Imperial Myth* "severed the bonds of patriotic loyalty" that would've made the Economic, Military, Social and Religious changes navigable.[229]

On the economic front, the later Roman state, lacking a competent bureaucracy, was viewed as a predatory institution to be avoided or ignored at all cost. Such led to the emergence of regional economies and the birth of an early *feudalism*.[230] With taxation drying up, the Imperial military and bureaucracy suffered institutional collapse.[231] With the Empire's ethnic and religious demographics shifting considerably in the 4th Century AD; there was little unity in cause or custom to keep the Empire coherent, nor the ability to use force when secessionism eventually arose.[232] As noted by Kulowinsky, by the 460s "[with] the utter confusion of legitimacy… service of barbarian kings came to be seen [as a

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[225] The oft-cited "school" of *Declinology* is one example of this, see (Bunting, 2011).
[226] (Bowersock, 1996, p. 31)
[227] (Duncan, 2012)
[228] (Glubb, 1976)
[229] (Duncan, 2012)
[230] (Geary, 1988, p. 152)
[231] (Little, 2016)
[232] (Butzer, 2012, p. 3632)

replacement for] the sort of career the Empire no longer provided".[233] Placed under increasing social and economic pressures, Roman society turned inward and became increasingly xenophobic – a presumption emerged that Roman values were inherently tied to the natives of Latium, and not able to be exported.[234]

As distant as the corridors of Cicero and Caesar may seem from those of the Kremlin – in both time and place – the ghost of Rome remains; its centrality in the global political canon was confirmed in the export of European models of sovereignty across the globe.[235] Owing to Rome's lengthy history and multi-faceted political character; the problems faced by the Roman Republic and Roman Empire, during their respective crises, are the same problems faced by all polities at one stage or another.[236] As such, the Roman experience serves as a model of *State Collapse* and, for the purposes of this paper, *Imperial Order* and *Imperial Collapse*.

As noted by political scientist Ira William Zartman, in his seminal work *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, "the pattern [of state collapse] is remarkably similar across the cases… marked by the loss of control over political and economic space".[237] In such circumstances, authority tends to devolve to the next appropriate candidate at a regional or local level. The process of this institutional unravelling has been described by Zartman, who places its origins in the centre of the political order. A sixth step has been added here to provide for the re-emergence of institutions:

1. "Power devolves to the peripheries when (because) the centre fights among itself.
2. Power withers at the centre by default because central government loses its power base.
3. Government malfunctions by avoiding necessary but difficult choices – institutional incoherence and "political flabbiness"

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[233] (Kulowinski, 2012, p. 47)
[234] (Dmitriev, 2020, p. 598)
[235] (Bowersock, 1996, p. 29)
[236] See, for example, the Tory use of Rome in the 18th Century at (Ward, 1964, p. 413)
[237] (Zartman, 1995, p. 9)

4. The incumbents practice only defensive politics, fending off challenges and reducing threats, concentrating on procedural rather than substantive measures.

5. The center loses control over its own state agents, who begin to operate on their own account."[238]

6. The new authorities face different geopolitical circumstances to the former state, and thus adapt existing institutions or create new ones.

Whilst such a state of affairs is typical of expansionist and colonial empires due to their *adoptive* ethnic heterogeneity – the phenomenon of *Ethnogenesis* means that even in the case where the periphery is settled by the people of the Metropole, a separate identity can still gradually form and become a rallying point for the emergence of a *national polity*.[239] There is need for clarification here –the Soviet use of the term was focused on the genetic origins of ethnic groups.[240] The term itself, however, has been applied to the general formation of ethnic identities as social discourse.[241]

Ethnicity Theory is a hotly debated topic, and the interchangeability of *Nation* and *Ethnicity* causes further ambiguity in a minefield already pockmarked with such factional disputes as *Primordialism, Instrumentalism, Materialism and Constructionism*.[242] Rejecting the blood quantum of the *Primordialists* and the class warfare of the *Marxist Materialists*; Ethnicity, according to the *Instrumentalists* and *Constructivists*, emerges as the result of social interaction.[243] While both agree that Ethnicity is socially constructed; *Instrumentalists* believe that the emphasis of ethnic traits is a conscious choice made for the purposes of Social Mobilisation, whereas *Constructivists* err on the side of such arising gradually from bi-partisan *Identity Negotiation*.[244]

The concept of an ethnic community, or *Ethnie*, according to Anthony D. Smith, "resides in this quartet of myths, memories, values and symbols… the myth-symbol complex…

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[238] (Zartman, 1995, p. 65)
[239] (Gillett, 2006, p. 241)
[240] (Khalid, 2021, p. 513)
[241] (Tiesler, 2021, p. 85)
[242] (Adlparvar & Tadros, 2016, p. 123)
[243] (Hechter, 1988, p. 116)
[244] (Banks, 2003, p. 11)

[which is] exceptionally durable… [able] to persist over many generations".[245] Whilst this construction of *Ethnicity* transforms it into an abstraction, it can still be distinguished from the related concept of *Nationality* in the explicit political nature of the latter.[246] In other words, Ethnicity is "inscribed culturally in one's body, whereas nationality is culturally contradictory, deeply embedded but more and more open to choice".[247] It is also placed at a higher level of abstraction – as noted by Benedict Anderson in his renowned work, *Imagined Communities*, "[Nations are] *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members…".[248] Yet they will know that, in those members, they share a mutually recognised identity that transcends blood relations.

The emergence of *Nationality* should therefore be understood as a form of *Identity Negotiation*. Such is particularly relevant in the emergence of "ethnic" *Criollos*, or American-born people of full Spanish descent.[249] The *Criollos*, having been born in the Americas, felt more sentimental attachment to their homelands in the Americas than the Iberian Peninsula; a fact that was not lost on the Metropole, which thus pursued exclusionary policies barring Criollos from the administration of the colonies.[250] Ironically, however, the social tensions that arose from such policies further grounded the Criollos in their distinct identity as having been born in a social, political and environmental climate alien to the Iberians.[251] As Anderson writes; "Even if he was born within one week of his father's migration, the accident of his birth consigned him to subordination… born in the Americas, he could not be a true Spaniard; ergo born in Spain, the *Peninsular* could not be a true American".[252] The addition of linguistic and cultural divergence to this pre-existing class tension formed a sufficient crucible to make the formation of a distinct identity inevitable.[253]

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[245] (Smith, 1986, p. 16)
[246] (Stewart, 2007, p. 1)
[247] (James, 1996, p. 16)
[248] (Anderson, 1983, p. 6)
[249] (Donghi, 1993, p. 49)
[250] (Stewart, 2007, p. 34)
[251] (Gilbert, 2006, p. 7)
[252] (Anderson, 1983, p. 201)
[253] (Stokes, 2017)

This identity, entrenched in the "particular territory with specific social, economic or developmental conditions" is only one taxonomical step away from being politized in the form of a *Nation*.[254] For our purposes the *Nation* can be thus understood as "a cultural entity characterised by a variety of common objective features, such as language, customs and habits, and economic activities... [held together by] the subjective force of a sense of identity]".[255] With it emerges the *Nation State*; a *State* – that is, a centralised organisation (*Polity*) ruling over a particular territory with a monopoly on the use of violence[256] – that *stands* as the representative of a particular *Nation*.[257]

Whilst the emergence of the *Nation State* is a modern phenomenon, the understanding of *Nationality* in the *civic* sense is much more ancient – having its primordial formation in the *Hobbesian* City States of the Ancient World. Such can also be seen in the Classical Republic of Rome and Carthage, both of which had their precedential forms of non-familial state loyalty.[258] Even in the case of France, *national sentiment* had begun to emerge throughout the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), when "a sense of separateness and characteristics of one people being different from one's own became recognized and fostered a sense of national consciousness".[259] Where such a *sentiment* differs from the political concept of *Nationalism* appears to be in its mobilizational capacity. In the words of Ramón Máiz, "[Nationalism] necessarily a mass phenomenon, not an elite one".[260] At the latest, the Netherlands poses an example of the emergence of a cohesive *bourgeois national identity* – having its roots in the Dutch Revolt of 1568 appealing to the defence of a shared *Vaderland*.[261]

Whilst the modern term of *Country* often shows a synthesis of *State* and *Nation*, it should be remembered that *Nation* is form of social organization whilst the *State* is a form of political organization. The State is not merely an agreement between family or clan groups to cooperate, nor is it evidenced by the existence of great architectural projects as those

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[254] (Fialová, et al., 2010, p. 49)
[255] (Schwarz, 2006, p. 151)
[256] (Weber, 1919, p. 1)
[257] (Brubaker, 1998, p. 28)
[258] (Duncan, 2018, p. 15)
[259] (Whittington, 2016, p. 79)
[260] (Máiz, 2001, p. 83)
[261] (Renier, 1944, p. 14)

constructed 12,000 years ago at Göbekli Tepe.[262] Rather, it is the deferral of authority to a higher abstraction; "a set of political institutions resting on a conception of [supreme] legal authority".[263]

Institutions, as "the set of rules, constraints, and behavioural guidelines, enforced by either formal or informal means external to the individual, which are designed or arise to shape the behaviour of individual actors", have normative and lasting pressures on society itself.[264] These institutions form the *body politic*, and like Aesop's fabled political body, are prerequisite to the existence of a state.[265] Organised according to their roles, they are; the Government (those who rule), the Judiciary (those who adjudicate), the Bureaucracy (those who administrate), the Military (those who defend), and the Public (those who work).

Wherein these organs of statehood are subject to a single, absolute law of the land, or constitution (that which legitimises), that is confined to a defined territorial space – a State is manifest.[266] Charles Tilly has further summarised this into simply "a ruler, an apparatus of rule, [and] a subject population" that work in conjunction to engage in "external interactions of various sorts, from trade, diplomacy, and mass migration to war".[267] In *The Early State*, Henri J. M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik further expand upon this list to include Territoriality, Independence, Population, Urbanization, Infrastructure, Trade and Markets, Division of Labour, a Stable Means of Subsistence, Social Stratification, Ideology, Law, and a Governing Structure to enforce it.[268]

In any discussion of State Formation, two theories should still be discussed and compared. The first is the *Hobbesian* theory of state formation. Writing in *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes sought to justify absolutist rule in England by first appealing to the rationale behind *deferred authority*.[269] Hobbes's reconstruction of the *State of Nature*, that is, the time

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[262] (Clare, 2020, p. 81)
[263] (Donner, 1986, p. 283)
[264] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 7)
[265] (Kantorowicz, 1957, p. 11)
[266] Note however that the law needn't be written down, nor in
[267] (Tilly, 2012, p. 269)
[268] (Claessen & Skalnik, 2011, pp. 533-600)
[269] (Robertson, 1911, p. 547)

before the emergence of States, envisions an anarchic world wherein violence is the norm between atomised individuals and life is thus "nasty, brutish and short".[270] The *State* then, emerges as "that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence".[271] Yet it should be noted that the idea of a *State of Nature* existing at all is questionable. In *The Origins of the Political Order*, Francis Fukuyama offers an alternative theory. Focusing on Evolutionary Biology, Fukuyama argues that *Homo Sapiens* are, like their Chimpanzee cousins, inherently *Social Animals*.[272] As such, community cooperation is biologically hardwired – and results in the emergence of social groupings such as family, clan and tribal organisation.[273]

The shift from a communal band to a State therefore merely requires the necessity of an abstraction – a process justified, according to Max Weber, on Charismatic, Traditional, or Rational-Legal grounds.[274] In instances of Charismatic state-building – usually in the case of revolutionary challenges to the existing order – the new order "cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both".[275] Thus, leadership is vested in bureaucratic class – existing either in conjunction with or in the wake of the charismatic leadership.[276] According to Claessen and Skalnik, the earliest form of State is "inchoate", characterised by "dominant kinship, family and community ties in the field of politics, a limited existence of full-time specialists, vague and ad hoc forms of taxation, and social contrasts that were offset by reciprocity and direct contacts between the ruler and the ruled".[277]

As mentioned previously, the transformation of clan-based societies into a *State* is precipitated by the emergence of *territoriality* – that is, "[the] geographical expression of social power"[278] – during the Neolithic revolution.[279] According to one hypothesis,

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[270] (Hobbes, 1651, p. 78)
[271] (Hobbes, 1651, p. 106)
[272] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 57)
[273] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 87)
[274] This is in reference to Weberian Tripartite Authority as defined in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology.* See (Weber, 1968).
[275] (Weber, 1920, p. 364)
[276] (Toth, 1972, p. 98)
[277] (Claessen & Skalnik, 2011, p. 589)
[278] (Sack, 1983, p. 55)
[279] (Stiebing Jr., 2009, p. 11)

competing territorial claims led to internecine warfare, depleting the patrimonial bureaucracy of the tribal organisations and thus legitimising by necessity the emergence of a *polity* separate from the family or clan itself – usually in the form of a *depersonalised* territorial polity.[280] With politics thus depersonalised, the polity takes upon a life of its own – growing organically even whilst the authority remains consolidated in the leader or leadership class. Thus, even while the Charismatic leader or leadership class may go extinct, the State continues to exist as a form of *institutional memory*.[281] Per Claessen and Skalnik, this kind of polity – the "early state" – is characterised by plurality between kinship and locality, hereditary appointment and meritocracy, and "where redistribution and reciprocity dominated the relations between the social strata".[282] The final formation of the State is thus upon the triumph of the *bureaucratic* over the *familial* and the *institutional* over the *ad hoc*.

The fundamental distinction between a *State* and mere *Personal Despotism* – a distinction first made by Montesquieu,[283] but expanded upon by more recently by Fukuyama,[284] is thus not a modern development. Nor is the concept of the State more generally. The *Peace of Westphalia (1648)* is often erroneously cited as the *birth* of the State in Europe. Yet it is, in fact, its *rebirth*; the return of a political order that had vanished off the face of Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire. As per the writings of the 14th Century French jurist, Jean de Terrevermeille; the physical person of the king, had long been relegated to "a simple guardian of the crown" and the *State* emerged thus as "a permanent entity whose aim is the common good".[285] The *Peace of Westphalia* therefore merely enshrined the idea of the State as a *Res Publica* (Public Thing) – the State had long been

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[280] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 121)
[281] Per (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 32): Institutions are the actions and customs of a group of people cooperating may be passed down, even whilst the original logic necessitating such actions has ceased. The example provided is of two automobile repair shops: "if one shop has a lower ceiling than the other, its employees may determine that raising a car beyond a certain height can cause it to be damaged by the ceiling. The current employees inform new employees of this workaround. They, in turn, inform future new employees, even if the person who originally discovered the problem no longer works there."
[282] (Claessen & Skalnik, 2011, p. 589)
[283] See Book II, Chapter 1 (Baron de Montesquieu, 1777)
[284] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 37)
[285] (Soubeyran, 2019)

re-emerging amongst the Aristocratic Clans of "Barbarians" who walked among the ruins of the post-Roman world.[286]

The origins of the abstraction of the *Crown* (the State) from the ruler had thus begun much earlier. In *The Kings Two Bodies*, historian Ernst Kantorowicz as early as the Bronze Age traces of *The Crown* were seen in the Egyptian New Kingdom.[287] This distinction was also noted in *Politics*, where Aristotle notes that, of the five types of Kingdom, one can be *Legal Tyranny*, and the other as a *Total Kingship* – wherein the individual does not govern, but owns.[288] Aristotle (384–322) furthermore makes a distinction between friends of the prince and friends of *the princedom*.[289] This distinction is tellingly descriptive of the state of Athenian politics in Aristotles time; the *State* existed as a legal abstraction apart from, and binding on, its government or ruling dynasty.[290]

Noting the conflict caused by clan and familial rivalries, Cleisthenes of Athens (570 – c. 508 BCE), famously reorganised the traditional power structure of Athens from one based on four clans, to one based on ten geographic δήμοι (*demoi* – "divisions of the people") – from which δημοκρατία (*democratia* – "rule of the demos") derives.[291] As such, rule became *depersonalised*, and the *State* emerged as a bureaucratic reality. Similar models of law-based rule was gradually adopted throughout the Hellenic World, and was exported east in the conquests of Alexander the Great, impacting further the political development of Persia and Central Asia.[292]

Charles Tilly, in discussing France's transition from a clan society in the 7th Century into a bureaucratic war machine by the 13th Century, was led to famously declare that "War made the state, and the state made war".[293] Tilly's view, later dubbed the "Bellicist Tradition", is

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[286] (Luttwak, 1976, p. 109)
[287] (Kantorowicz, 1957, p. 495)
[288] (Keyt & Robinson, 1995, p. 50)
[289] (Aristotle, 1985, p. 1287b)
[290] See (Ostwald, 1986, p. 412)
[291] (Lewis, 1963, p. 22)
[292] As noted by (Harl, 2010, p. 7); "Isocrates created a notion that the Greek city-state could be exported to the Near East; and it would be the Macedonian kings, especially Alexander and his successors, who would do this".
[293] (Tilly, 1975, p. 25).

based on a presumption that families are far too small to manage territorial acquisitions and thus "incorporate" others into the ruling class in order to run the empire. Such echoed in later works such as Andrian Woolridge's *The Aristocracy of Talent*, centres on a pattern by which the *Feudal Aristocracy* – having gained their positions through charismatic or traditional authority – had to make concessions to a growing government machine. Woolridge provides a fairly simple explanation for the shrinking role of patrimonialism in European politics: "Demand for able bureaucrats who could master the [emerging] government machine grew much faster than the ability of the landed aristocracy to supply them".[294]

This was certainly the case in Ancient China. There, the flat and easily traversable geography of the Northern Plains – the hearth of Chinese civilisation – gave rise to a geopolitical crucible that made continuous internecine warfare unavoidable.[295] Writing, which had emerged in the 12th Century BCE as merely pictographic symbols, had become widespread and increasingly abstract – allowing thus for the communication of abstract ideas.[296] In turn, whilst there was not a Chinese *civilisation*,[297] the aforementioned geographic factors led to the mutual recognition of a shared linguistic *urheimat* (linguistic origin) between the populations on the Northern Plains.[298] Consequently, the centuries-long period of warfare known as the *Warring States Period* saw the proliferation of a common administrative and literary tradition through the existing linguistic connectivity.[299]

 The evolutionary pressures of constant warfare caused the *democratisation*[300] of the military and the emergence of *meritocratic rule*; the traditional chariot-riding nobility being exchanged for larger and larger forces of infantry and cavalry.[301] The system of

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[294] (Woolridge, 2021, p. 107)
[295] (Ramsey, 1989, p. 19)
[296] (Boltz, 2000, p. 1)
[297] "Civilisation" here is used to refer to a broader self-consciousness, see (Izetbegovic, 1996, p. 45).
[298] "Urheimat" here refers to the linguistic homeland of the Neolithic Sino-Tibetan people. See (Zhang, et al., 2019).
[299] (Fang, et al., 2015, p. 9224)
[300] "Democratization" here refers not to the military becoming subject to popular control, but rather being filled by the populace itself (beyond the expected organisation through clan or familial ties).
[301] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 122)

quasi-feudalism that had persisted as an economic reality for centuries, was replaced with a system that organised people according to locality rather than kinship ties – creating new geographical expressions of territory by subjugating clans to a foreign prefecture governor appointed by the Qin State.[302] Variables other than warfare and institutional exchange can play a role, however; the existence of uniformity in identity or ideology perhaps being the most important factor. [303] With the growth of Chinese cultural and economic prowess, non-Sinitic populations on the periphery where *sinicized* and soon adopted Chinese cultural, religious and administrative traditions; the State thus emerged in Korea and Japan in the absence of a *Bellicist* tradition.[304]

That said, wherein the geography does not provide external pressures for State Formation, the formalisation of a common religious tradition or the emergence of a Charismatic (and often messianic) figure form a temporary rallying point.[305] The emergence of the State in such circumstances is not always absolute, however, and can be prevented by geographical or social factors. In India, Southern China and – for the purposes of this thesis, the Eurasian Steppe – Clan and Kinship ties were never fully extinguished and have remained present in many facets of daily life until the present.[306] The cause appears to be primarily geographical. According to Jeffrey Herbst, wherein the lay of the land allows for the emergence of high population densities, the multitude of competing kinships does not allow for such to remain the decisive authority.[307] Wherein such competing kinship groups can easily relocate to less contentious territory, however, a higher authority is not necessary, or at least not practically justifiable.[308]

For this reason, societies that emerged in the vast expanses of Eurasia, Australia or the Southern Cape of Africa, *in generatim*, kinship groupings.[309] This is, however, a generalisation – and both Fukuyama and Herbst fall into the trap of concluding that the

[302] (Yang & Yu-ning, 1977, p. 66)
[303] (Taylor & Botea, 2008, p. 28)
[304] (Huang & Kang, 2022, p. 31)
[305] (Weber, 1919, p. 11)
[306] (Immamova, et al., 2021)
[307] (Herbst, 2000, p. 11)
[308] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 135)
[309] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 137)

rarity of State formation in such regions equates to the impossibility of such to transpire.[310] Yet a wider view of history suggests that such generalisations are inaccurate. Indeed, it is the position of this paper that *State Formation*, or something akin to it, does occur (albeit with difficulty) in geographically challenging circumstances. As such, States and "State-like" polities did form in such conditions, and the reality of their later conquest by European powers does not preclude their existence.

Where a higher authority does emerge, however, it often depends upon stronger forces of retention – such as the distribution of immense wealth or the dissemination of immense terror. Such *Leadership by Terror* was notably the case in the case of the Zulu Empire (1816-1897).[311] The similarities to State Formation on the Cape and State formation on the Steppe are discussed in Part 3.6. Nonetheless, the modern existence of *States* in those regions is not the result of organic development, but rather the product of a top-down transplantation of the "Westphalian Tradition" from Europe through colonisation.[312] Such provides some explanatory power for the weakness of institutions in those countries.

Weak institutions often give rise to the return of sub-state forces, usually manifest in a return to *non-bureaucratic patrimonialism* or "tribalism".[313] Such occurred during the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Somalia (1991-2006).[314] As the moral authority of Mohammed Said Barre withered, the legitimacy of the Federal Republic waned – leading to an explosion of inter-communal violence.[315] As put by anthropologist Dr Anna Simmons, "it was not violence alone that triggered dissolution; rather violence broke out as (or because) these subaltern moralities broke through"; thus competing moralities (*laws*, or the *Fukuyamean* "Political Order") emerged below the state and "people found themselves falling back on lineage and clan members they knew and could trust".[316] As such, public property also devolved to whichever family, clan or other alliance happened to be in their possession; "Conflicts no longer were settled by officials of the Republic, but by the heads

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[310] (Herbst, 2000, p. 12)
[311] (Vries, 2004, p. ix)
[312] (Doboš, et al., 2021, p. 7)
[313] Patrimonialism is defined as the favouring of those who are loyal – such as friends or family – per (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 45)
[314] (Ahmed & Green, 1999, p. 113)
[315] (Fitzgerald, 2002, p. 16)
[316] (Simmons, 1994, p. 820)

of extended families on the basis of Customary Law".[317] What is notable about the Somali case, however, is the fact that there was a sub-state Customary Law to fall back upon.

These families then took on increasingly geopolitical behaviours, emulating phenomena such as the *Security Dilemma* – "while what one group regarded as defensive posturing appear pre-emptive and aggressive to another".[318] Reduced to its pre-state clan dynamics, Somalia faced (and continues to face) the consequences of *re-patrimonialisation*. The exception to this was in Somaliland, wherein "the narratives constructed around the idea of Somaliland as an exceptional and inherently legitimate sovereign entity feed directly into the ongoing negotiations and power struggles that give shape to its political settlement".[319]

The decision to become independent was thus in pursuit of "political distance" from the troubled national administration; to officiate a means of local dispute management that would be accepted by all northern clans.[320] Thus the state was reformed in pursuit of that "common good" discussed at length by Hobbes and Tevermeille. The experiences of the Federal Republic of Somalia demonstrate that rule shifts to the next most legitimate form of authority – be it a state-like or a familial or kinship-based organisation. Viewing a State thus as a *Hobbesian Leviathan* abstracted from competing entities in wider society thus allows one to see through the Leviathan and into the machinations below its skin.

A distinction should be made also between *State-building* and *Nation-building*. Whilst the former has been covered immensely here, the latter is an important part of social categorization and mobilization. Whilst the two terms seem synonymous, the difference can be seen in the their antyonymic processes – State Failure and Nation Failure. *State Failure* generally refers to the breakdown of institutions; the loss of the "public goods" of legal, commercial and security infrastructure. *Nation Failure*, however, can be defined as a situation in which "the cultural projection of a nation is no longer convincing to many; there is no consensus on the cultural traditions, customs, symbols, rituals, and the historical experience".[321] In such circumstances, the *moral authority* of the *nation* shifts, with subject

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[317] (Notten, 2003, p. 148)
[318] (Simmons, 1994, p. 820)
[319] (Phillips, 2013, p. 57)
[320] (Hoehne, 2010, p. 5)
[321] (Bogdandy, et al., 2005, p. 580)

populations redefining themselves accordingly under a new paradigm.[322] The paradigm in question can be based on organic and pre-existing clefts, or on the emergence of new identities – such as in the case of the *Criollos*. In such cases, *Successionism* becomes a danger.

Nonetheless, despite being an ongoing phenomenon throughout human history, *Secession* itself has remained a "neglected topic among philosophers".[323] According to Canadian Sociologist Dr Metta Spencer, *Secession* occurs as a result of the intersection of structural, historical, ideological and motivational factors.[324] Of these, the most important seem to be the ideological and/or the motivational. The reason for this is simple; in places wherein the structural conditions for secession exist but the ideological motivations do not – society maintains nominal loyalty to the authority or *Imperial Order* or *State* in question. The fracturing of such requires other elements such as the existence of "an ideology of nation-building" within the successionist parts of the Empire or State.[325]

This retained loyalty to the *Imperial Order* in question can have some peculiar effects. American Political Scientist Alexander J. Motyl explores *Imperial Collapse and Imperial Revival* in his article of the same name.[326] In analysing *Imperial Revival*, Motyl reviews Estonian Political Scientist Rein Taagepera's previous works on life cycles of Empires.[327] In describing the boom-and-bust cycle of *Imperial Orders* as resembling "flat-topped parabolas", Motyl charts the collapse of emprise along different points of the parabolas. In this analysis, the relative timing of the collapse, rather than the causes, are key to creating what Motyl refers to as *five conditions for reimperialisation*.[328] These five categories are then broadly grouped into two variants; the *Rate of Collapse*, the *Timing of Collapse*. If the collapse is rapid, it will generate significant regional instability not only in the former lands of the Empire, but in the surrounding lands.[329] It will also, however, generate what

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[322] (Stewart, 2007, p. 1)
[323] (Buchanan & Levinson, 2021)
[324] (Spencer, 1998, p. 9)
[325] (Tilly, 1975)
[326] (Motyl, 1999)
[327] See (Taagepera, 1978, p. 108)
[328] (Motyl, 1999, p. 130)
[329] (Motyl, 1999, p. 126)

Motyl refers to as "Revolutionary Elites inclined to imperial agendas".[330] With regard to the timing of the collapse; the point along the parabola (ascendancy, zenith, decline) will determine whether the *Imperial Order* retains legitimacy, capacity and the rationale for *reimperialisation*. The full depiction of Motyl's model is shown in the **Table 1**.

Motyl also provides numerous means by which an Empire can end.[331] *Evolution* is the most benign, and merely covers the institutional transformation of the Empire into another kind of policy – for example, a Confederation, or, bereft of its imperium, a Nation State. *Decay* is defined as being "the weakening of the core's rule of the periphery", a matter that is differentiated from *Decline*, which is "[the] reduction in the imperial state's power in general and military capability in particular".[332] Other terms include *Disassemblege*, the "emergence of significant interperiphery relations" and *Attrition*, defined as being "the progressive loss of bits and pieces of peripheral territories" – a consequence of *Disassemblege*.[333] Finally, Motyl defines *Collapse* as being the shock-induced "comprehensive breakdown of the hublike imperial structure", with *Reimperialization* being its subsequent reconstitution.[334] *Collapse*, the most extreme outcome, often results in a *threatened* core surrounded by *threatening* peripheral territories.[335]

In comparing the Habsburg, German and Russian Empires, Motyl concludes that the the Habsburg Emprie was already well in the process of *Decay,* and such *Decay* was "even" – with the Hungarian and Czechoslovak lands constituting separate cores (this will be covered in **Part 2.3** in greater detail). Imperial Russia, by contrast, retained a powerful core territory that "possessed [greater] armed forces, elites, and resources" relative to the peripheral territories.[336] Such provided for *Reimperialization*. Germany was an even more successful example of *Reimperialization* – fostered by the existence of "abandoned brethren" and the existence of the NSDAP as an force of greater mobilizational capacity than that found in Wilhelmine Germany.[337]

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[330] (Motyl, 1999, p. 127)
[331] (Motyl, 1999, p. 128)
[332] (Motyl, 2001, p. 4)
[333] (Motyl, 2001, p. 5)
[334] (Motyl, 2001, p. 5)
[335] (Motyl, 1999, p. 130)
[336] (Motyl, 2001, p. 94)
[337] (Motyl, 2001, p. 95)

Table 1: Alexander J. Motyl's Theory of _Imperial Collapse_:

Timing of Collapse:	Conditions Retained:	Result:
Zenith (the "Plateu" of the parabola)	**[x] Regional Instability** **[x] Frustrated Revolutionary Elites** **[x] Coherent Imperial Ideology** **[x] Abandoned Brethren** **[x] State Capacity**	Taking advantage of regional instability, Frustrated Revolutionary Elites set out to restore the former imperial borders and reincorporate their abandoned brethren. The core retains greater capacity than the periphery, hence the State Capacity allows _Full Reimperialisation_. Example: **Russia (1917-1923)**
Ascendency	**[x] Regional Instability** **[x] Frustrated Revolutionary Elites** **[x] Coherent Imperial Ideology** **[x] Abandoned Brethren** [o] State Capacity	Taking advantage of regional instability, Frustrated Revolutionary Elites set out to restore the former imperial borders and reincorporate their abandoned brethren. The core, however, lacks the necessary state capacity. _Partial Reimperialisation_. Example: **Germany (1917-1923)**
Decline	**[x] Regional Instability** **[x] Frustrated Revolutionary Elites** [o] Coherent Imperial Ideology [o] Abandoned Brethren [o] State Capacity	Surrounded by Regional Instability, Revolutionary elites try to restore the old order. That said, the legitimacy of the old empire has faded, and lacking both a coherent imperial ideology and the necessary state capacity, the elites fail to restore the Imperial Order. _No Reimperialisation_. Example: **Austria-Hungary (1917-1919)**

Wherein a collapse occurs at the Zenith of an Empire – the *hegemonic rule* of the *Imperial Order* as the dominant framework of analysis means that a conception of politics beyond the Empire is impossible.[338] Thus, according to Motyl in his analysis of Russian Reimperialisation; "all, including the stridently anti-imperial Bolsheviks, had little choice but to pursue their disparate agendas within the predefined political boundaries of the Empire and in terms of the seemingly natural hierarchical relations between Russia and its neighbours".[339] As such, Bolsheviks saw the struggle of non-Russian socialists as being a subordinate part of the Russian struggle.[340] Armed with this presumption and the Russian heartland (with its overwhelmingly superior capacity), the Bolsheviks were quick to re-establish the former borders of the former Tsarist Empire.

A similar phenomenon can be viewed in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. When Rome was faced with its first collapse – that of the *Crisis of the Third Century* – the Roman Empire was at its height. Consequently, whilst the assassination of Severus Alexander sent the Empire into a crisis in which it lost 45% of its territory (to the successionist Gallic and Palmyrine Empires) – the outbreak of the crisis left a class of revolutionary elites, a coherent imperial ideology, and a superior state capacity within the Italian peninsular and the core territories.[341] As a result, the core territories were able to limp through the crisis and eventually restore the Empire such capacity and the remaining loyalty of Romans within the renegade provinces.[342]

This state of affairs differs greatly from the fall in the 5th Century. At that time, Rome had ceased to be the *de facto* authority, before it was recognised as such *de jure*; having been in a state of continuous decline for almost a Century.[343] Odoacer was not so much deposing the *Imperial Order* but rather recognising that it no longer existed, and indeed hadn't done so since the end of the 4th Century.[344] Where an Odoacer-like *fait accompli* doesn't occur,

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[338] (Motyl, 1999, p. 133)
[339] (Motyl, 1999, p. 134)
[340] (Motyl, 1999, p. 135)
[341] (Hekster, 2008, p. 21)
[342] (Watson, 2004, p. 72)
[343] (MacGeorge, 2002, p. 171)
[344] (Jones, 1986, p. 187)

the result at a State level is often called a "failed state" – the aforementioned case of Somalia is exemplar.

Writing at the alleged death of the Russian *Imperium* in 1991, Motyl concluded that whilst an imperial system may re-emerge, it would be "brittle" and eventually collapse entirely.[345] In such cases, a renewed Russian Empire would emerge "in a condition of advanced decay" and therefore prone to attrition.[346] Notably, Motyl revised his analysis in 2001. Following the Chechen Wars, Motyl noted that if relative power balances between Russia and its former imperium stay the same, then Russian Reimperialization becomes a conditional factor. As noted in **Figure 1**, Russia's continued strength relative to its neighbours provided for, at the very least, a "Creeping Reimperialization" – the retrenchment of independent states in the Russian system. The antithesis to Creeping Reimperialization, according to Motyl, is institutional reform – a process that can be achieved through EU/NATO Membership due to the constraints of both organisations. Yet the same process of institutional expansion may result in the opposite outcome in the post-Soviet Space – with "anticolonialism" being pursued by Post-Soviet elites who seek to concretize their power vis-à-vis a hostile civil society.[347]

| | | **Russia** | | |
		Becomes Weaker	Stays the Same	Becomes Stronger
Non-Russians	Become Weaker	*Chaos*	Empire	Empire
	Stay the Same	Independence	*Creeping Re-Imperialization*	Empire
	Become Stronger	Independence	Independence	*Independence*

Figure 1 – Russian Reimperialization, per (Motyl, 2001)

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[345] (Motyl, 1999, p. 141)
[346] (Motyl, 2001, p. 144)
[347] (Motyl, 2001, p. 115)

Certainly, some aspects of this prediction have come to pass. Whilst Motyl had predicted a "partial reimperialization", no geopolitical fever-dream would have predicted Russia risking a graceful reconstitution in pursuit of a suicidal war in Ukraine.[348] Yet, those paying attention noticed the reassertion of historical autocracy from 1993 onwards in both the core territories and the Post-Imperium.[349] Furthermore, whilst Russia underwent a period of *Attrition* in the 1990s, it has since seemingly restored its prominence in the post-Soviet space and has emerged as a regional power once more to chagrin of the United States.[350] Such actions are demonstrated by the Kremlin's willingness to intervene directly beyond its "near abroad" in the 2015-2020 Intervention in the Syrian Civil War.[351]

Russia's inexplicable parabola, at least compared to that of other historical empires, deserves an explanation. It has long been claimed that Russia's inability to become democratic is a matter of size or composition.[352] With size an unlikely factor – after all, nobody denies India's democratic credentials – the blame falls to composition.[353] This paper will seek to argue that, having been founded in the *Steppe Tradition*, Russia lacked a *Sedentary Tradition* that allowed other Empires, such as those of the post-Habsburg Territories, to seamlessly transition into Nation States. *Seamlessly* is an overstatement here, as a cursory look at history will demonstrate that the "Austrian Question" remained prominent up until the 1950s. Yet the fact that an Austrian Nation State, and a vibrant one at that, was able to emerge at all is a factor worth considering.

The following chapter will chart the evolution of the Habsburg Empire, with a specific focus on the Austrian Lands. Austria's transformation from a post-imperial rump state, and the means by which Austrian elites were able to foce such changes, will be examined. The role of geographically bounds institutions unique to the Austrian lands will be emphasised as the point of divergence with the post-imperial Russian state. The other component of the late Habsburg Realm, the Kingdom of Hungary, will also be briefly discussed.

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[348] (Motyl, 2001, p. 96)
[349] (Figes, 2022, p. 323)
[350] (Figes, 2022, p. 240)
[351] (Wood, 2018, p. 102)
[352] See a further discussion of the Size factor in (Gerring & Zarecki, 2011)
[353] (Bajpaee, 2024)

2.3 When Empires become Nation States: The Habsburg Realm

In keeping with the idea of the state being a *Hobbesian* abstraction of deferred legitimacy, it should be understood that such legitimacy can, in times of delegitimization, devolve to a lower, more legitimate form of power. In the case of *Imperial Collapse*, this layer becomes the emergent Nation State, Kingdoms, or other sub-Imperial polities. For the purposes of this paper, Russia's *Imperial Parabola* can be compared with that of the the Holy Roman Empire (of the German Nation) and its later evolution into the Austrian Empire and the Austrian Nation State.[354] Like the Russian Imperial Project, the Austrian Empire possessed a "1,000 year-long history" and a host of post-imperial territorial claims.[355] Yet unlike the Russian project, the questions of "What is Russia? Where is Russia?" came to be answered in due course.[356]

The Holy Roman Empire, on paper, lasted from 800AD until early August in 1806.[357] Yet the Empire of 1806 appeared vastly different from its 9th Century counterpart. Far from the elective monarchy of the Ottonian days, the Empire came to be dominated by one family – the Habsburgs – who maintained "a parallel dynastic-territorial empire" composed of "core [Habsburg] territories" and a periphery of "imperial" territories with divergent institutions.[358] Furthermore, the Empire's *Imperial Ideology* had suffered two deaths by the time of the Habsburgs. Firstly, the *Investiture Controversy* (1076-1124) deprived the Emperor of absolute rule. The Thirty Years War (1618-1648), in turn, transformed the Empire into an archaism and emboldened alternative forms of authority, such as the Nation State.[359]

This did not happen overnight – and indeed the full consequences of the changes in European Geopolitics would not be understood until over a Century later when they became manifest in the French Revolution (1789-1799).[360] Yet, a paradigm shift did nonetheless occur. With the collapse of Imperial and Papal authority in Catholic Europe,

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[354] The name changed to include the later following the 1512 *Diet of Cologne* in recognition of the lost Italian and Burgundian territories. See (Wilson, 2011, p. 85).
[355] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 10)
[356] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 96)
[357] (Muldoon, 1999, p. 139)
[358] (Wilson, 2016, p. ii)
[359] (Carsten, 1963, p. 5)
[360] French Revolution see (Duncan, 2014).

"religion and ideology [came] to be considered within the domestic jurisdiction of each territorial state and to be eliminated as aspects of international relations".[361] Simply put, the Aristocracy and Clergy could no longer rely upon the papacy in Rome as a means of balancing against Royal authority, and thus sought concordance.[362] This change impacted the development of the third estate (the commoners), who, deprived of a common Catholic identity and economically tied to the realm, became the progenitors of "National Ideology".[363]

By the late 18th Century, the Holy Roman Empire increasingly became a burden for the ruling House of Habsburg, who gave more importance to the territories under their direct control (the so-called "Austrian Empire").[364] In the words of Austrian historian Tim Blanning, "vitality progressively drained away from imperial ceremonial… By 1764… the [German] princes… failed to appear [on ceremony], thus proclaiming their refusal to acknowledge any form of submission to imperial authority."[365] This splintering of authority would not have occurred had the Empire remained ideologically cohesive, but the loss of the Empire's claim to the *Christian Imperium* was a catastrophic blow to its moral legitimacy.[366] The exclusion of Papal authority from the *Peace of Westphalia (1648)* thus lowered the Empire to a secular level, in which its authority was questionable at best.[367] The 1806 abdication of Emperor Francis II and the consequent dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire was thus a recognition of the status quo; *The Empire is dead, long live the Empire.*[368]

Having lost *Christian Imperium*, the Habsburgs reorganised their multi-ethnic territorial possessions into an *Imperium Austriacum* – new Empire with a new mandate. Despite its appearance as the discards of the Holy Roman Empire, the Austrian Empire was a vastly different polity, and possessed a spirit of modernity in nation building and ideology.[369] It

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[361] (Wright, 1954, p. 619)
[362] (Farr, 2005, p. 157)
[363] (Wright, 1954)
[364] (Muldoon, 1999, p. 114)
[365] (Blanning, 2012, p. 68)
[366] (Bryce, 2007, p. 2)
[367] (Muldoon, 1999, p. 115)
[368] (Wilson, 2011, p. 36)
[369] (Blanning, 2012, p. 67)

therefore also carried new set of imperial *sacred cows* that would have to be slaughtered in order for the Empire to ideologically collapse.[370]

Monolingualism in Austrian German, which differs significantly from its northern counterpart, [371] was introduced throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries as the Habsburgs sought to build *Volksgeist* ("People's Spirit") amongst their diverse subjects.[372] In addition to language, the Habsburgs sought to utilise also the image of the Emperor as the true Christian monarch through which the Austrian People, the *Ōstarrīchi* (Old German: "people of the Eastern Realm"), the true Christians, could attain *Heil* ("Salvation").[373] As noted by Christine Wolf in *The Limits of Loyalty: Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances and State Patriotism in the Habsburg Monarchy*:

> "In contrast to Wilhelm II [of Germany], but showing similarities to Victoria [of Britain], the image of Franz Joseph as "the Father of His Peoples" was designed to transcend the nationalities conflicts in imperial Austria. The cult of personality around Franz Joseph became increasingly depoliticized, sentimentalized, and religiously inflected, and enhanced the popularity of the monarch."[374]

With the loyalty of the people tied to a universal head of state, the Habsburgs sought to embody a unified myth. In a way that would be emulated by the Soviet Union a century later, the national heroes of the various ethnicities – such as Libuše or Charles IV of Bohemia – anachronistically became *Austrian* heroes.[375] As such, the Habsburg monarchy was able to create a kind of *Imperial Patriotism* that was based not on ethnic characteristics but on the shared historical narrative of the Habsburg Realm as the civilisation with a common religion (Catholicism) and a common geographical space (the

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[370] (Motyl, 1999, p. 135)

[371] Whilst the national standards are closer to each other (with both being the descendant of High German), the "Standard" Austrian dialect nonetheless contains several major phonetic and grammatical differences. These include Monophthongization ("*heitz*" becomes "*haatz*"), the loss of the Genetive Case, and significant influences in vocabulary from Czech, Hungarian, Italian, French and Yiddish (representing the cosmopolitan nature of the Empire).

[372] (Brukmüller, 2007, p. 22)

[373] (Urbanitsch, 2004, p. 102)

[374] (Wolf, 2007, p. 203)

[375] See, for example, (Hormayr, 1807).

Danube River Basin).[376] The *Austrian Man* thus emerged as a kind of "New Soviet Man" – a formless ideological entity wherein any distinguishing factor was merely a regional quirk and not the manifestation of a "divergent" National identity.[377] As noted by Stefan Zweig in *The World of Yesterday*;

> "At court, among the nobility, and among the people, the German was related in blood to the Slavic, the Hungarian, the Spanish, the Italian, the French, the Flemish; and it was the particular genius of this city of music that dissolved all the contrasts harmoniously into a new and unique thing, the *Austrian*."[378]

These changes were not easily stomached by the multinational empire, however. Beginning with the reforms of Joseph II (1765–1790), the march towards *Austrianism* was often met with staunch opposition from the *feudal* nobility,[379] but also from the peasantry – who now saw their local traditions and institutions overridden by the *Viennese Standard*.[380] The *Austrianising State* thus had to impose an authoritarian system of censorship and espionage against potential threats in the Empire, spearheaded by Austrian Chancellor Klemens von Metternich.[381] This too, proved inadequate. The Revolutions of 1848, obliterated the totalitarian *Metternich System* and eroded the centripetal forces that had held the Empire together – namely the nascent Ideology and the emerging Economic System.[382] In the words of the legendary French foreign minister, Charles Maurice De Talleyrand, "You can do many things with a Bayonette, but you can't sit on it".[383]

The first death was, once again, ideological. The *German Question* had forced the Habsburgs to re-assert themselves against an ascendent Prussia as the dominant German power on the continent.[384] When such ambitions failed against a better organised Prussian

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[376] (Brukmüller, 2007, p. 24)
[377] See (Geller, 1988)
[378] (Zweig, 1942, p. 32)
[379] The use of Feudal here is in specific reference to the system of Manorialism and Serfdom that was practiced throughout Europe in the middle ages. See (Vernadsky, 1948).
[380] (Craeybeckx, 1970, p. 49)
[381] (Wheatcroft, 1996, p. 234)
[382] (Jászi, 1929, p. 212)
[383] (Quinlivan, 2022)
[384] Austro-Prussian War 1866. See (Wheatcroft, 1996, p. 260).

military in 1866, the Habsburgs lost two pillars of their legitimacy – the respect commanded by the Imperial Officer Corps and their role as the Guardian of Catholicism.[385] The former, which had its origins in the rebirth of the dynasty in 1848 as a military-led counter-revolution against liberalism, faded in the face of modern warfare. As such, the bombastic image of the *Radetzky March* in the immediate post-1848 era came to be increasingly replaced by the image of "incompetence, inefficiency, and apathy" by the turn of the century – with many a Habsburg Officer relating to Jaroslav Hašek's masterpiece, *The Good Soldier Švejk*.[386] The defeat of the *Concordat Army* – so-called due to the *Concordat of 1855* between the Catholic Church and the Habsburg Monarchy[387] – dealt a fatal blow to the conservative Catholic order and forced Franz Joseph I to negotiate with Hungarian Nationalists, who sought Dualism within the realm.[388]

Lacking an ideological basis, other justifications for the Empire became increasingly spurious. Since the beginning of the 18th Century, the shift from state-centric *Cameralism*[389] to *Capitalism* had further exacerbated cultural and economic differences between Cisleithania (the Austrian Lands) and Transleithania (the Hungarian Lands).[390] Within Cisleithania, the non-German minorities (Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Slovenes and Italians) were empowered by industrialisation and economic growth which had "began to emerge in the empire's western regions in the late eighteenth century and diffused gradually to the less advanced regions [in the east]".[391] As a result, minorities within Cisleithania were mobilised as part and parcel of the Austrian industrialisation. Thus even during the 1848 Revolution, "The [Prague-based] Slavonic Congress was Austrophile in character, putting forward the idea that Austria is the natural homeland of the Slavs".[392]

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[385] (Brukmüller, 2007, p. 24)

[386] (Cole, 2007, p. 54)

[387] The Concordat of 1855 granted the Church significant power in ecclesiastical and social matters within the Habsburg Realm, and in return restored the Habsburg Monarchy as the "First Among Equals" of Christendom. See (Evans, 1999, p. 124).

[388] (Kann, 1974, p. 105)

[389] *Cameralism* is a system of state-centric economic management that was popular in Europe throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries. It was partially implemented in the Habsburg Realm from 1750 onwards. (Adler, 2020, p. 7).

[390] (Szántay, 2021, p. 551)

[391] (Schulze & Wolf, 2009, p. 4)

[392] (Monticone, 1968, p. 112)

Evidently, the attempts to transform the Catholic Habsburg lands into *Austrian* lands had succeeded somewhat.

Within Transleithania, however, industrialisation was initially limited to the new metropolis of Budapest, and pre-industrial society remained very much in place in the Hungarian countryside.[393] The reasons for this was the unique institutions that Hungarians brought into Europe from the Eurasian Steppe – over which a kind of "incomplete feudalism" was grafted. Such developmental quirks are further explored in Part 3.6, but the important consequences of this are that the Hungarian nobility was uniquely powerful vis-à-vis the ruling Habsburg Dynasty.[394] Unlike other subjects of the Habsburg crown, the Hungarians were able to appeal to an unextinguished and independent tradition of rule that vested power in the nobility, not the crown.[395] Thus, any attempt at modernisation-from-above by the Habsburgs was able to be fiercely resisted by the Hungarian nobility and their elected parliament.[396]

For its part, the Hungarian Parliament – which remained 93% Magyar even whilst Magyars themselves constituted less than half of Transleithania's population – adopted an increasingly chauvinistic posture towards the minorities in the Empire.[397] Believing in "the superiority of Magyar culture over the back ward cultures of the Slavic and Rumanian peoples", the new Hungarian embarked on a process of intense *Magyarization* from 1871 onwards.[398] The consequences of this were profound. With the stroke of a pen, any illusion of pluralism within the Empire was shattered, and the Hungarians placed themselves firmly in the path of any future reform. The Habsburgs, having long conceded autonomy to the Hungarian nobility, lacked any ability to reign in such *Magyar Imperialism*.

One such reform attempt, for example, was *The Fundamental Articles* (1871) – a constitutional amendment that sought to restore the Kingdom of Bohemia to a place of equality within the Empire. Seen as a first step for equality within the Slavic portions of

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[393] (Mutschlechner, 2013)
[394] (Molnár, 2001, p. 32)
[395] (Fukuyama, 2012)
[396] (Hantos, 1904)
[397] (Berry, 1918, p. 27)
[398] (Monticone, 1968, p. 119)

the Empire, the reform was stymied by the Hungarian parliament, who jealously guarded their traditional position as co-monarchists, and the power that came with it.[399] By preventing further reforms, however, the Hungarians condemned the Dual Monarchy to a policy of *majoritarianism* – provoking anxiety from nationalist forces within the Empire, as well as outrage from irredentist forces beyond its borders.[400] The subsequent collapse of the Empire was not inevitable, but it was guaranteed when the imperial elite abandoned the idea of *Austrianism* and moved towards a non-pluralistic and exclusionary model of Imperialism. The shooting of an Austrian Archduke and his wife in Sarajevo in August 1914 was merely the endpoint of such trends.

Thus, even prior to the war, the project of *Austrianism* had been slaughtered on the altar of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, which did as much to raise the Hungarians to Imperial Status as to bring the dynasty and its ideology down to the level of the laity.[401] With the Empire having recognised the existence of "Hungarians" as a distinct group worthy of dualism, the question rose as to what an "Austrian".[402] *Magyarization* within Transleithnia and demands for greater rights by Slavs within Cisleithania generated significant cultural anxiety amongst the German Austrian population.[403] Much like Russians in the late Soviet period, Austrian Germans found themselves apart from the Empire, and ultimately, opposed to it.[404] Radical German nationalists, such as Georg von Schönerer, would openly align with Pan-Germanism – doing much to lay the groundwork for the emergence of the Nazi Party under Austrian-born Adolph Hitler.[405]

With the announcement of Woodrow Wilson's *Fourteen Points* in January 1918, autonomy or outright independence became increasingly possible for the Empire's minorities.[406] A last-ditch attempt to save the Empire was made by *Kaiser* Karl I Von Habsburg, who laid out plans for a *Federal Union of Austrian Peoples* in the *Völkermanifest* ("People's

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[399] (Jászi, 1929, p. 297)
[400] (Jászi, 1929, p. 32)
[401] (Deak, 1983, p. 11)
[402] (Jászi, 1929, p. 245)
[403] (Suppan, 2008, p. 171)
[404] (Bessinger, 2009, p. 32)
[405] (Bideleux & Jeffries, 1998, p. 355)
[406] (Hannigan, 2016, p. 125)

Manifesto").[407] By the date of its publishing on the 16th of October, however, Czechoslovak independence had already been guaranteed by the allies, and the allies had already rejected the continuation of the Empire as a unitary unit.[408] Thus, as in the case of the Soviet Union, the Imperial Authority waned, and the *National Cores* of the Empire, in both Hungary and "German-Austria", proclaimed independence from the Empire itself.[409]

In both cases, there was a degree of contradiction. Within Hungary, a short-lived concessionary republic collapsed into a communist rump state, and immediately found itself at war with all of its neighbours in an attempt at *Reimperialization*.[410] Within Cisleithania, the so-called "German-Austrians" declared a Republic in their name and just as quickly began to pursue *Anschluss* – unification with Germany.[411] This willingness to spurn the *Germanic* Hapsburg dynasty in favour of unification with Germany may seem odd, particularly given the Protestant character of the latter, but such was motivated by a strong modernist undercurrent. Per Willfried Spohn, "the Habsburg regime represented a backward, anti-democratic and anti-national regime, whereas Germany embodied a modem, democratic as well as national order".[412] Thus, whilst Pan-Germanism was an *ethnic* and *modernist* movement, *Austrianism*, and its ultimate successor in (*Neo-*)*Austrian Nationalism* was a *civic* and *traditionalist* movement.[413]

Despite not mourning the passing of the Empire, its collapse was the "Greatest Geopolitical catastrophe of the Century" for Austrian-Germans.[414] With the independence of the constituent parts of the Empire, over 3.5 million Austrian-Germans found themselves as potential minorities within the new post-imperial Nation States.[415] With the *Treaty of St. Germain* (1919) however, the allies crushed any hopes of Pan-German unification – setting in motion the conditions for the reconvening of such forces around

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[407] (Neck, 1967, p. 66)
[408] (Watson, 2014, p. 541)
[409] (Boyer, 1995, p. 439)
[410] (Völgyes, 1970, p. 58)
[411] (Boyer, 1995, p. 440)
[412] (Spohn, 2005, p. 60)
[413] (Spohn, 2005, p. 58)
[414] See (Reiner, 2005), a century later Putin would make a near-identical quote with reference to the Post-Soviet diaspora of Russians.
[415] (Warner, 1990, p. 25)

German-led Nazi regime two decades later.[416] That said, in 1919 such positions appear to have been motivated by the dire circumstances faced by the rump state of German-Austria and the inability of the *Neo-Austrianist* parties to work together.[417] As noted by Jody Manning;

> "…trade channels that had developed over centuries were blocked off overnight [by new nations intent on breaking ties to Austria]… Austria's supply of natural resources was highly imbalanced and inadequate, the country had no coal deposits and its agricultural output was insufficient to meet the needs of the population…"[418]

Thus, as the economic and geopolitical situation stabilised in the First Austrian Republic, the potential for the development of a *(Neo-)Austrian Nationalism* distinct from Pan-Germanism increased.[419] Naturally, the *traditionalism* of *(Neo-)Austrian Nationalism* meant that its most steadfast adherents were the Christian Social Party (CSP) and its noble, clerical and rural base.[420] On the contrary, the *modernism* of Pan-Germanism lent itself to the Social Democratic Party (SDAP), which remained dominant "Red Vienna" even as the rest of the country elected the CSP throughout the 1920s.[421] On the contrary, the CSP maintained that "because Austria had undergone a different historical experience", it could not be considered the same "Nation" as the Germans.[422] Thus, in the words of A. J. P. Taylor "The democrats were not 'Austrian'; the 'Austrians' were not democrats".[423]

Thus, as the Austrian Republic entered the new decade, the CSP laid the seeds of a national identity that defined itself in opposition to Germany in terms of geography, institutions, and the Catholic Faith.[424] Ignaz Seipel, the head of the CSP and a Roman Catholic Priest, initially emphasised the predominance of the *State* over the *Nation* in social relations – an

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[416] (Gould, 1950, p. 220)
[417] (Barker, 1973, p. 27)
[418] (Manning, 2012, p. 67)
[419] (Spohn, 2005, p. 61)
[420] (Manning, 2012, p. 70)
[421] (Spohn, 2005, p. 58)
[422] (Zweig, 1942, p. 71)
[423] (Taylor, 1976, p. 258)
[424] (Manning, 2012, p. 67)

institutionalist view.[425] Seipel's view was that "[*Austrianism*] was not dead… [and] had taken on a different form, and the German-Austrians, the backbone of [Old Austria], now formed the last true bastion of the 'Austrian Idea'".[426] As such, "the concept of the German Reich… in a spiritual or philosophical, rather than a geographical sense… was anathema to him".[427]

Thus, whilst the CSP affirmed their "Germanness" in an *ethnic* sense, they opposed *Anschluss* in so far as it would represent the extinguishing of the superior *Austrian Tradition* of rule and its replacement by *Prussian Militarism* as the representative of the "German Race".[428] Thus, Austria saw itself as a surviving bastion of the Germanic *Kulturkampf,* beholden to a "special mission" to "rise in defence of the Christian faith among the German people" – a task that could only be achieved separate from the modernist and protestant-dominated Germany.[429] The CSP articulated "mentalities of the countryside and the mountains against the city",[430] harnessing a particular brand of Austrian *Particularism* that differed markedly from the *Unitarianism* of the Prussian Tradition.[431]

With such having its basis in institutional inertia rather than ideology, it should be unsurprising that Austria's post-war years was marked by the rise of "indigenous" ideologies such as *Austrofascism* and *Austromarxism*.[432] The former – which took shape throughout the late 1930s under the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss and his successors in the Fatherland Front – differed markedly from other Fascist movements in Europe in that it was strictly opposed to *modernist*[433] views of the state and its role in social relations

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[425] See (Boyer, 1995, p. 411): Seipel's writings were expressed in *Nation and State* (1916).
[426] (Manning, 2012, p. 71)
[427] (Manning, 2012, p. 69)
[428] (Ryschka, 2008, p. 37)
[429] (Messner, 2004, p. 86)
[430] (Spohn, 2005, p. 61)
[431] Per (Enderink, 2010, p. 135); the Habsburg tradition of rule held until the bitter end "apprehensions about both (democratic) liberalism and monarchical centralism".
[432] (Messner, 2004, p. 1)
[433] See Part 4.11, Fascism is "modernist" in the sense that it derives from a post-1789 construction of socio-political relations. It rejects the role of pre-modern institutions and seeks to unify party and society (not merely party and state).

generally.[434] Thus, the *Austrofascists* would preserve throughout the 30s a cohesive sense of "Austrianness" that was neither *ethnic* nor nostalgically aimed at *reimperialization*, but grounded in its geographically-tied legal institutions and the Catholic Faith.[435]

Whilsts the *Austrofascists* were Fascists, they despised German National Socialism, seeing it as "the resurrection of the Protestant-Prussian paradigm of 1871… the modern manifestation of an old foe… which was threatening, once again, to enslave all of Germandom under its yoke.".[436] Nazism was thus rendered in the Austrian eyes as an outgrowth of "Prussian Megalomania" – the expression of which, with its "exaggeration in mass persuasion and execution, ultra-Americanism, [and] suffocation of thought in noise and colour" – found little common ground with the "affection, sensibility, moderation, and modesty" of Austria's Biedermeier Revivalism.[437] By tying such cultural quirks to the geographical origin (Prussia), the Austrian elite was able to "foreignize" the Nazi movement.

Austromarxism, which had gradually taken shape since 1904, would likewise form around a basis of *Nātiō ex Īnstitūtiōnum,* or *Staatsnation*.[438] Originally coined by Gregor von Berzevicy, the *Staatsnation* concept held that "unity in government and administration gives rise to the equality of customs, laws and [national] ways of thinking".[439] According to *Austromarxist* Alfred Klahr "The Austrian people have lived under different economic and political conditions than the other Germans in the Reich and have therefore had a different national development".[440] Remarkably, the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ), in rejecting Communist Internationalism, found itself in agreement with the CSP and the Fatherland Front (and notably not the SDAP) on the rejection of *Anschluss* and the maintenance of the Austrian Nation State as a "concrete reality".[441]

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[434] (Thorpe, 2010, p. 320)
[435] See (Kirk, 2003, p. 34): In a rejection of the "New Order / New Man" espoused by Nazis and Italian Fascists, the Dollfuss regime oversaw a period of "refeudalisation" in the economy and a "return to the Middle Ages" in its social relations.
[436] (Manning, 2012, p. 218)
[437] (Manning, 2012, p. 245)
[438] (Botz, 2016, p. 201)
[439] (Feichtinger, 2012, p. 58)
[440] (Klahr, 1937, p. 13)
[441] (Haider, 1998, p. 294)

The experience of seven years of occupation the Nazi German Reich would bring such elite ideologies into society, "awaken[ing] the Austrians' desire, however immature and vague, to separate from their German brothers".[442] Like the Latin Americans of the 18th and 19th Centuries, a sense of palpable "Austrianness" emerged in response to the introduction of an alien legal regime that subordinated Austrians in their role as "Lesser Germans". [443] It was this appeal to a pre-existing socio-legal conception of the Austrian Nation that allowed Austrian dissidents to position Austria, however ahistorically, as the "First Victim of Nazi Aggression".[444] Such also served as a rebuke to the Stalinist concept of nations as inherently ethno-linguistic, securing Austria from future integration into a Communist German State.[445]

The result of such framing was *Moscow Declaration of 1943* and the subsequent post-war reestablishment in 1955 of an independent Austrian State based on the borders and constitution of the 1920s.[446] With independence, Austrian policymakers were able to embark on a process of State-building – a process that saw the fate of Austrians once again diverge under a different socio-political regime to their German bretheren.[447] The (re-)emergence of Austrian Nationalism was therefore grounded in the *Staatsnation* construction of "a simple and positive feeling for the state [and its institutions], closely connected with the idea of homeland".[448]

Such loyalty coincided with self-conscious efforts Austrian State to separate Austria from the history of Greater Germany through "the transformation of regional and local traditions to national cultural salience" and the embrace of a geopolitical identity grounded in Cold War neutrality.[449] As put by Willfried Spohn:

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[442] (Fellner, 1988, p. 268)
[443] (Buckmüller, 1985, p. 520)
[444] (Botz, 2016, p. 201)
[445] (Fellner, 1988, p. 275)
[446] (Botz, 2016, p. 203)
[447] (Spohn, 2005, p. 61)
[448] (Fellner, 1988, p. 284)
[449] (Spohn, 2005, p. 63)

> "The Austrians defined themselves, due to the ambiguities of the national meaning of the German cultural legacy, primarily as a *Staatsnation* and, at the same time, substituted gradually the German *Kultumation* with an Austrian *Kultumation*…"

The impact of such policies is clear today. In the years following the reestablishment of the Austrian State, the percentage of Austrians that believed in the existence of *an Austrian Nation* or *Volk* rose from less than 20% at independence in 1955, to 80% by 1993.[450] This number has continued to rise even with the onset of immigration and integration with the European Union – with Austria's "permanent self-centeredness" often making it a standout in the era of globalization.[451] Much like the post-Soviet States discussed later in this paper, Austria is a young *Nation State*, even if it possesses a lengthy history. Like those nations, the youth of the Austrian project is often interpreted as parochialism.[452]

The Austrian post-imperial experience differs considerably from that of Hungary. Whilst Hungary's early history is covered in Part 3.4 in greater detail, the necessary implications of such is that Hungary possessed an autonomous nobility and a territorial tradition dating back to the 9th Century.[453]

For its part, the Soviet Union – as the Papal Carrier of Soviet Communism – faced a similar loss of legitimacy. Like the Austrian Empire and the Holy Roman Empire before it, the final grave diggers of the Soviet *Imperium* were the citizens of the Metropole themselves; with Russian independence famously preceding that of Kazakhstan – leaving the latter as the final holdout of Soviet Territory on the world map.[454] That said, whilst the Austro-Hungarian Realm produced democracies – albeit unstable ones – no such evolution occurred within the Soviet Post-Imperium. The continual existence of patronage networks and economic institutions provided for rapid *Reimperialization* in a way that was not possible in the Habsburg Realm.

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[450] (Bruckmüller, 1996, p. 65)
[451] (Mayr, 2008)
[452] (Spohn, 2005, p. 70)
[453] (Molnár, 2001, p. 32)
[454] (Vasilyeva, 1991)

Similarities existed in the breakup of both Empires. Within post-Imperial Hungary, an experiment with Communism likewise led to attempted *Reimperialization* between the years of 1919 and 1923.[455] Despite the best efforts of Béla Kun to win over the Hungarian Nationalists in the creation of a "Red Empire", however, the project collapsed in a heap and the army mutinied.[456] The success of the Bolsheviks, by contrast, demonstrates that the institutions of Communist Rule were much more readily accepted in the former Tsarist territories than in the Austro-Hungarian heartland.[457]

It is the view of this paper, therefore, that Russia's aversion to normalcy is tied to its geopolitically derived institutions – specifically, the legacy of the evolution of a sedentary state on the Eurasian Steppe. The conditions in which state-building occurred allowed for the proliferation of a particular set of attributes – hereafter referred to as the *Steppe Tradition* – that took hold in Russian political projects thereafter. Whilst institutions cannot be said to be determinative, they are, in the words of Fukuyama, "Sticky",[458] and are therefore worthy of inspection in light of latter State behaviour. The following chapter will seek to explain the formation of such institutions using a geopolitical analysis of the Eurasian Steppe.

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[455] (Völgyes, 1970, p. 58)
[456] (Pastor, 1988, p. 441)
[457] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 113)
[458] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 36)

3. State-building in the Heartland of the World Island

Geopolitical Theory, like all functional theories, is a prism; lacking a object of observation it is worthless. To this end, returning to the origins of Geopolitics in Mackinder's writings, the object of this study will be the *Heartland* itself – and Russia's place in it.[459] Writing at a time when "the outline of the map of the world [had] been completed with approximate accuracy",[460] and the state system was "closed",[461] Mackinder noted that it was possible "for the first time … [to make] larger geographical and historic generalizations.".[462] In pursuit of such generalisations, Mackinder, a geographer by trade, was drawn to the "remarkable contrast" between "the unbroken lowland of the east" and the mountainous and fragmented (both politically and geographically) European Peninsula.[463] This lowland, the referred to as the Eurasian Steppe, stretches 8000km from the Pannonian Basin in the West to the Manchurian Steppe and the foothills of the East Siberian Mountains.[464] In the modern day, the Argun and Amur Rivers, which cut through the East Siberian Mountains and drain into the pacific, form the Sino-Russian border east of Mongolia.[465] The Pannonian Basin itself is an exclave, separated entirely from the rest of the Steppe by the Carpathian Mountains.[466]

Beyond the Carpathians, however, the Steppe forms a continuum, interrupted only by brief "narrowings" in the form of the "Gate of the People", or "Gate of Europe" south of the Urals, and the "Gate of Dzungaria" between the Altai and Tian-Shan ranges.[467] The Steppe is girded to the north by Siberia, a rocky volcanic region composed mostly of coniferous forests and dense marshland known as *Taiga*.[468] Further north still, the *Taiga* gives way to the inhospitable glacial archipelagos of the Russian arctic.[469] To the south, the Steppe

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[459] (Nestoras, 2023, p. 39)
[460] (Mackinder, 1904, p. 421)
[461] (Nestoras, 2023, p. 39)
[462] (Mackinder, 1904, p. 422)
[463] (Mackinder, 1904, p. 422)
[464] (Torok, et al., 2020, p. 3)
[465] (Shabad, 1958, p. 15)
[466] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 251)
[467] (Bello, 2016, p. 21)
[468] (Juday, 2024)
[469] (Forsyth, 1994, p. 145)

variably gives way to the Caucasus Mountains, the Turanian Basin, the Tian-Shan Mountains and the Gobi Desert.[470] This is demonstrated in *Figure 2*.
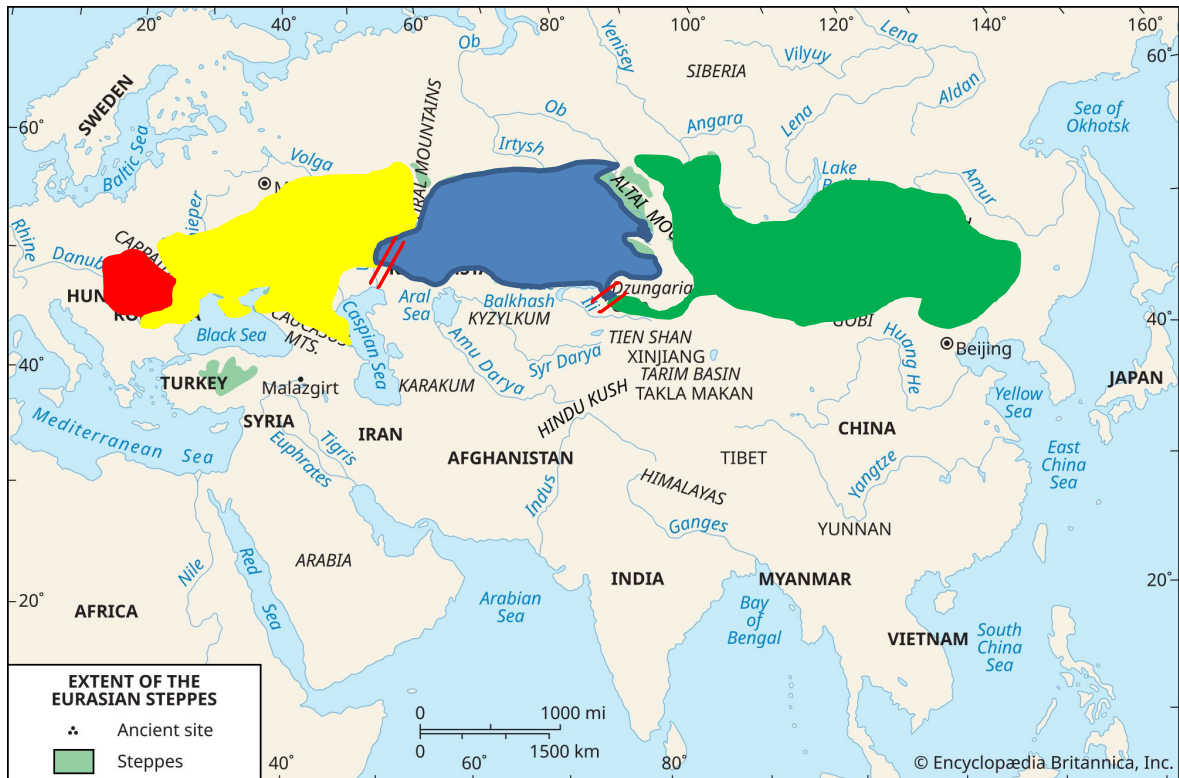

Figure 2 – *the Eurasian Steppe and its subdivisions. Panonian Basin (Red), Pontic-Caspian Steppe (Yellow), Kazakh Steppe (Blue), and Manchurian Steppe (Green). The "Gates" are marked by red brackets. Source: (McNeill, 2024)*

Along with its climate, perhaps the most enduring feature of the Eurasian Steppe is its centrality and connectivity. The Steppe shares a geographic continuum with China, Hindustan, Persia, Mesopotamia and Europe. It has thus long been privy to the cultural and technological developments of Confucian, Dharmic, Abrahamic and Greco-Roman civilisation – and their modern inheritors.[471] The contiguous nature of the Steppe lands means that ideas, goods, and people are able to rapidly traverse the Eurasian Landmass in a way that is simply not possible in the surrounding periphery.[472]

Indeed, only in the world's oceans is a rival found to the connectivity of the Steppe.[473] Thus, the Steppe should be viewed as a great ocean, wherein a mild disturbance in one

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[470] (Caroe, 1967, p. 13)
[471] (Mackinder, 1904, p. 431)
[472] (Nestoras, 2023, p. 40)
[473] (Christian, 1988, p. 37)

extremity can transform into a tsunami of historical proportions and crash against a peripheral states in the other.[474] Eurasian Empires, when they have emerged, have often been larger and more technologically advanced than their contemporaries.[475] The Eurasian Steppe, whilst peripheral to all sedentary civilisations, is evidentially central to the world system at large.

Yet if one describes the Steppe as a great ocean, then the Steppe must necessarily possess a "coast" – in other words; areas where the "land" of the periphery transforms into the Steppe, yet remains under the influence of both. This area, which Mackinder describes as the "Geographical Pivot of History", shall hereafter be referred to as "Inner Eurasia"; the largest part of which will be the object of this enquiry.[476] For reasons that shall be elaborated on, everything east of the Gate of Dzungaria will be therefore only receive passing mention in this analysis.

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[474] Per (Mackinder, 1904, p. 430); "The hordes which ultimately fell upon Europe in the middle of t fourteenth century gathered their first force 3000 miles away on high steppes of Mongolia."
[475] (Christian, 1992, p. 177)
[476] NOTE: This is not a new concept, it has been proposed by (Christian, 1988), (Hildinger, 1997), and (Neumann & Wigen, 2012), among others.
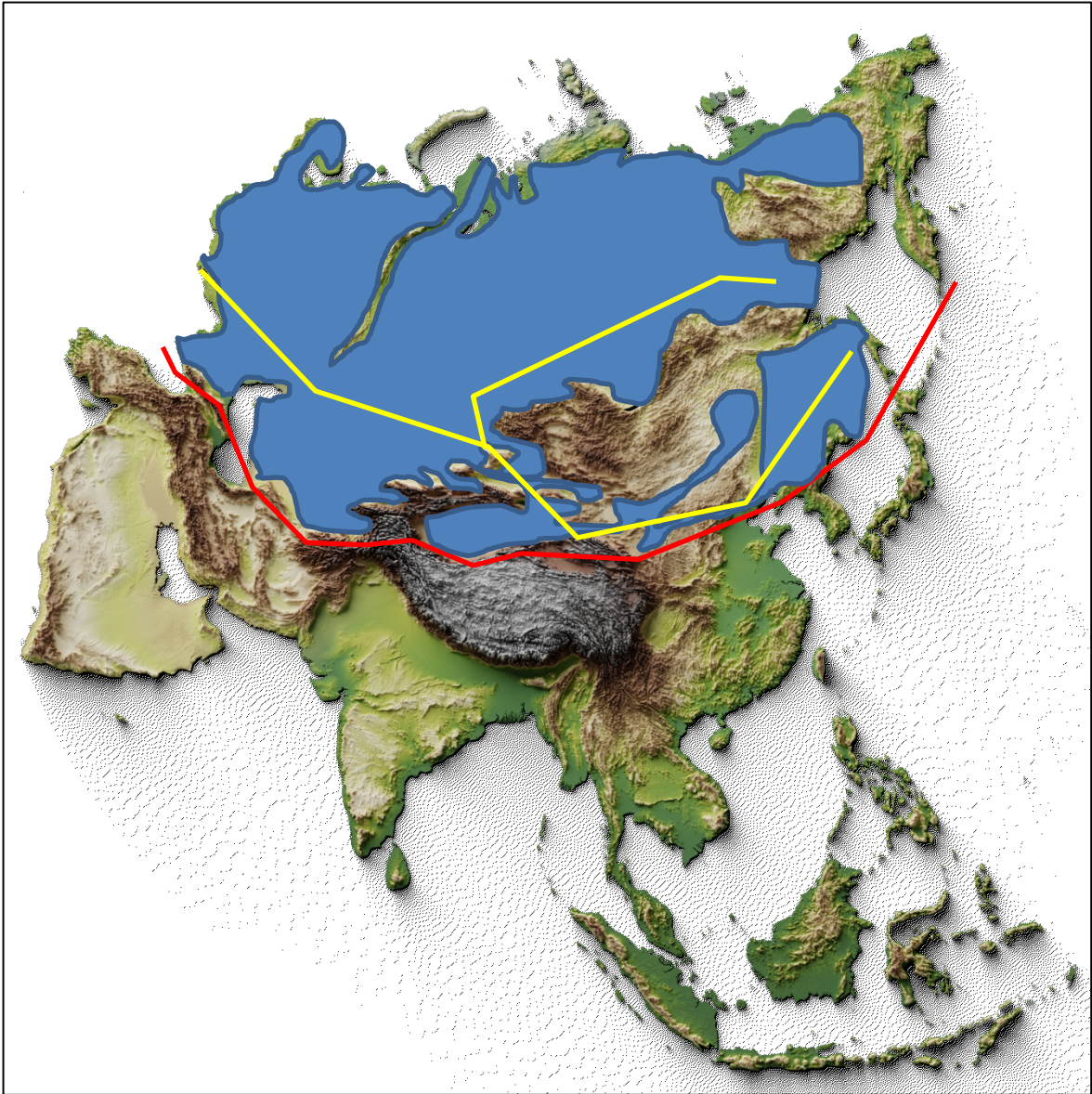
Figure 3 *– The "coastline" of the periphery, composed of the Hindu-Kush, Himalayas and Altai Range (red) and the Core of the Eurasian Steppe (yellow), between which lies the geographical region of Inner Eurasia (blue)*, as discussed by (Christian, 1988).

3.1 Inner Eurasia as a Geopolitical Space

Inner Eurasia thus describes the 27.5 million square kilometre space beginning in the Wild Fields of Ukraine and bifurcating in the east the Yakutia-Mammoth Steppe in the North and the Manchurian Steppe in the South.[477] Notably, this region is north of the a series of mountain chains that begin in the Urals and the Caucasus, extends through the Alborz and the Hindu Kush, before splitting at the Himalayas and the Altai-East Siberian Ranges.[478] Confined by its "coastline", Inner Eurasia sits outside the watersheds of the periphery, and receives comparatively low rainfall compared to Outer Eurasia.[479] This, combined with continental northerliness, results in Inner Eurasia being a land of extremes, with short, intense summers and long cold winters providing the largest temperature variation in earth.[480] Such conditions are not productive to agriculture, and consequently, despite having a similar size to Outer Eurasia, the estimated total population of Inner Eurasia has consistently remained one twentieth its size.[481] It was only through the intensities of Soviet rule that this factor was reduced to just one tenth.[482]

Low population density often prevented the establishment of large urban centres, making nomadic pastoralism the dominant way of life on the Steppe.[483] When major urban centres did emerge, as in the case of Karakorum of the 13th Century Mongolian Empire, they have usually did so as an outgrowth of the wider imperial system – and thus "quickly declined after the overarching political system [sustaining them] vanished."[484] A lack of major urban centres stymied the development of the kinds of centralised sedentary polities, or *States*, that developed in Outer Eurasia.[485] Thus, Inner Eurasia's relationship to Outer Eurasia was the kind of primordial dichotomy between the biblical archetypes of Caine and Abel; he who tills the soil, and he who roams the pasture.[486] Whilst the Bible hints at a

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[477] (Christian, 1988, p. 47)
[478] (Florida Center for Instructional Technology, 2009)
[479] (Christian, 1988, p. 46)
[480] Per (Badkar, 2014), "The most miserable place on earth".
[481] "Estimated" is a key word here, as per (Guinnane, 2021) the data of Inner Eurasia are unreliable due to the remoteness of the area studied.
[482] (Christian, 1988, p. 48)
[483] (Kerven, et al., 2021)
[484] (Bemmann, 2020, p. 139)
[485] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 313)
[486] See Genesis 4:1–18: "and Abel became a herder of sheep while Cain was a tiller of the soil". Per (Schnurer, 2017).

Bronze-age triumph of the Settler over the Nomad,[487] this wasn't always the case – more often than not, it was the role of Able to raid the rich peripheral pastures of Caine.

Writing in the fourteenth century, Arab Historian Ibn Khaldun emphasised that it was often the militarily superior nomadic civilisations that triumphed over their decadent and settled counterparts.[488] The reason for this, according to Ibn Khaldun, is the loss of عصبيّة (*'Asabiyyah* – "Group Cohesion") in settled, due to the now settled group, motivated previously by survival, having the *luxury* to be motivated by self-enrichment and thus more factional.[489] Thus, according to Ibn Khaldun, nomadic civilisations may triumph over settled societies – but do so at their own peril; "Nomadic Empires", when they have risen, have typically been "short lived", and not lasted more than a generation beyond their founding dynasty.[490] Thus, they are either replaced within the same geopolitical space – as is the case in the periphery – or they disappear off the map all together, due to "almost universal characteristic [of Inner Eurasian Nomadic Societies being] the establishment of cities on an open verdant site separate from previous settlements".[491]

This lack of physical permeance has had a tangible impact on how nomadic societies are viewed and studied.[492] As such, the vast array of Nomadic people of Inner Eurasia have variably come under the names of βάρβαρος (*Barbaros*) in the Hellenic World, म्लेच्छ (*Mlecca*) in the Indian Subcontinent, and 夷 (*Yí*) in the Sintic World – with all terms implying something primitive, foreign and antonymic to *civilisation*.[493] Contrary such appraisals, however, is the abundant evidence of rich material cultures extending as far back as the Scythians, from whom also derives "an almost three thousand year long steppe tradition of ordering politics".[494] Nonetheless, the epistemological staying power of *Whig Historiography* – by which history is seen as a linear progression from barbarity to

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[487] (Isbouts, 2019)
[488] (Moghadam, 1988, p. 390)
[489] (Bilal, 2017, p. 147)
[490] (Rogers, 2007, p. 274)
[491] (Bemmann, 2020, p. 140)
[492] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 311)
[493] (Winkler & Boletsi, 2023, p. 232)
[494] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 311)

civilisation[495] – means that historians and philosophers have tended to have a "State Centric" bias in their appraisal.[496] Where state-like institutions have appeared in Nomadic Societies, they have often been explained away with reference to contemporary polities in the periphery – from which such institutions are said to have been adopted.[497]

Issues of *Orientalism* and paternalism aside,[498] such serves to obscure both the institutions put into place by Steppe societies, as well as the very real impact such societies have had on the periphery. It also obfuscates the very real historical continuity between Steppe dynasties, who more often than not emerged out of extant political units and within extant "political orders". The Mongol Empire, for example, is often measured from the rise of Genghis Khan to leadership in 1177 until the death of Möngke Khan and the division of the Empire in 1259.[499] But as outlined previously, the *Pax Mongolica* was a product of the 14th Century, not the 13th Century. it existed in the *Post-Imperium* and can only be said to have started to end with the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty in 1368.[500] Even then, until the late 19th Century, the Steppe was dominated by descendants of the *Chinggisid* Generation. Viewing Steppe polities in terms of sovereign *polises* inevitably obscures their existence as suzerain *nomases*.

It is from such geopolitical conditions that we draw our final paradigm – that of the *Steppe Tradition* of State Development. If it can be demonstrated that Russia operates according to a distinct tradition of state-development, than many of the anomalies and misjudgements in recent history can be understood. As such, it is necessary to chart the emergence of this tradition before it can be applied as a tool of analysis to the Russian Imperium. For this purpose, the institutions of the nomadic empire of the Xiong-nu, the first of all recorded steppe empires, will be analysed. Such will provide a basic archetype that can then be presented in opposition to the implied *Sedentary Tradition* – that of mainland Europe. Russia can then be analysed as fitting either mould.

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[495] (Blackburn, 2008, p. 504)
[496] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 311)
[497] (Barfield, 1981, p. 47)
[498] (Said, 1977, p. 109)
[499] (Neal, 2006, p. 11)
[500] (Rogers, 2007, p. 250)

3.2 The First Lords of the Steppe

Homo Sapiens arrived on the Eurasian Steppe between 50,000 and 40,000 years ago, during the Initial Upper Palaeolithic Period.[501] The gradual diffusion of Homo Sapiens across Eurasia led to the divergence of biological traits as a result of cultural and environmental pressures, with a clear East-West split identifiable within Eurasian populations by 36,000 BC.[502] Geographically situated between these two population groups, North Eurasians emerged as a distinct genetic group.[503] From these isolated primordial populations, differing material and linguistic cultures emerged – although the exact process by which such came to pass remains a mystery.[504] It should also be noted that whilst such innovations may emerge in one culture, their geographic spread can be as much a process of adaptation as it can be evidence of conquest.[505] With this being said, the history of Central Asia and its institutions begins with the domestication of the horse on the Pontic Steppe in circa 4000BC.[506]
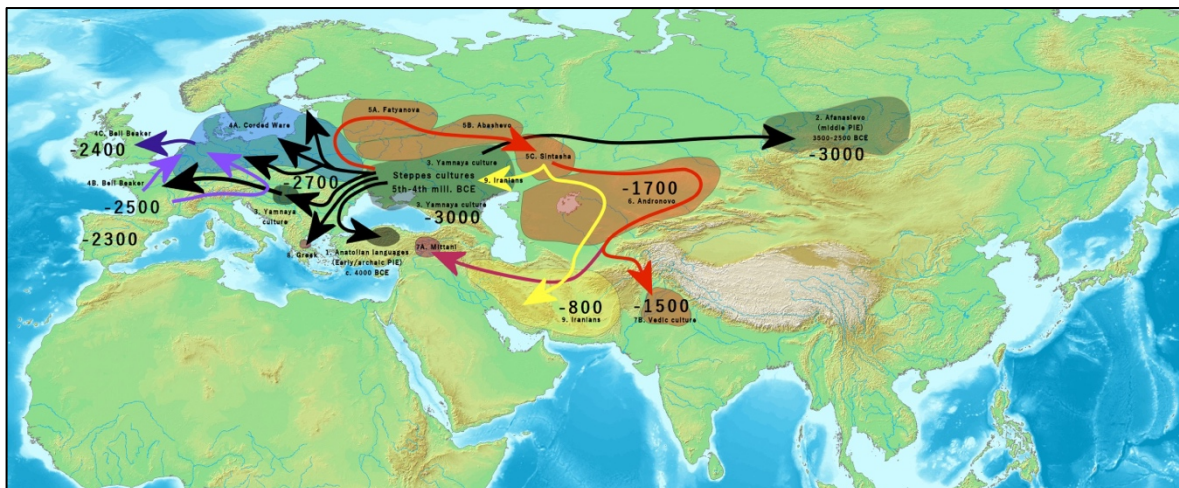

Figure 4 – The Indo-European Migrations following the domestication of the horse, 3000BCE to 800BCE. (Narasimhan, et al., 2019).

It seems strange to attach such importance to a new technology – but the domestication of the horse was the single largest factor to shape political development on the Steppe until

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[501] (González-Ruiz, 2012, p. 11)
[502] (Jeong, et al., 2019, p. 966)
[503] (González-Ruiz, 2012, p. 5)
[504] (Edmondson, 2007)
[505] (Anthony, 2010, p. 434)
[506] (Kuznetsov, 2006, p. 683)

the arrival of industrialisation in the 20th Century.[507] With the adoption of the horse, distances shrunk considerably – a tribal band could move from Manchuria to the Ukrainian Steppe in a matter of weeks.[508] Yet such new technologies also changed the nature of governance on the Steppe itself. As in the case of the American-Indian populations, equestrianism "disrupted subsistence economies, wrecked grassland and bison ecologies, created new social inequalities, unhinged gender relations, undermined traditional political hierarchies, and intensified resource competition and warfare".[509] It is thus with the adoption of the horse that the "State-building" on the Steppe has its origins.

Subsequent to the Spread of the horse across the Steppe, Indo-European migrations out of the Pontic Steppe would reach as far as the Iberian Peninsula in the West and the Tarim Basin in the East. There, the product of such migrations, the *Afanasievo Culture*, would introduce pastoralism as far east as the Ordos Plateau.[510] Centuries later, another product of the Indo-European migrations, the Indo-Iranian *Andronovo Culture*, would give rise to the *Sogdians* and the *Scythians* in the Central Steppe.[511] The former, the Eastern Iranic Sogdians, would settle between the rivers Ἰαξάρτης (*Jaxartes*) and Ὦξος (*Oxus*), forming the basis of sedentary civilisation in the Ferghana Valley that continues to this day.[512] The latter, the *Scythians*, emerged in the written record around 800 BCE as the dominant force on the Steppe.[513]

"Force" is a key word here, as there is great debate over whether such early "Nomadic Polities" constitute what would later be referred to as *Nomoi*, or merely coalitions of families that, lacking developed institutions, collapse into their component parts upon the

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[507] (Christian, 1988, p. 557)

[508] Per (Iqta, 2024), "a well-prepared Mongol rider could travel around 200-300 kilometres per day using fresh horses from relay stations", therefore 4,500 kilometres could be covered in 18-20 days.

[509] (Hämäläinen, 2023)

[510] Per (Hermes, et al., 2020, p. 1), "The emergence of the Afanasievo culture in the Altai Mountains appears to have coincided with the arrival of domesticated sheep, goats, and cattle."

[511] (Anthony, 2010, p. 540)

[512] (Simonin, 2012)

[513] Per (Ivantchik, 2018), the "written record" here refers to the Chinese, Indian, Persian and Greek sources, which all had different names for the same civilisation, including "Cimmerian" (west of the dnipro) "Scythian" (on the pontic steppe) "Saka" (on the central steppe) Massagetae (on the oxus) etc.

death of the leader.[514] Such presumptions are the basis of *Dependency Hypothesis*, the idea that "Nomadic empires [cannot] sustain themselves on a resource surplus generated among their own subjects and were therefore by-products of a successful sedentary civilisation".[515] According to this hypothesis, all institutions that emerge in Nomadic *Empires* and *States* are the result of "diffusion" rather than innovation – with institutions being adopted from one of the surrounding states on the periphery.[516]

Certainly, *some* evidence tends to bear this out – with the Nomadic States in geographical proximity of the centralised and institutionally rich Chinese Empires being often more organised than Nomadic polities that emerged in North Africa or in the Americas.[517] Yet such presumptions render Steppe populations merely passive receivers of *civilisation* from the sedentary states, rather than innovators and active participants in the regional or global paradigm. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that Steppe polities can develop of their own accord. As Nicola Di Cosmo has argued, factors such as environmental fragility and relative scarcity of resources often paved the way for *endogenous* state formation on the Steppe through a process of *Crisis, Militarisation, and Centralisation*:

> "The vulnerability and poverty of nomadic economy was at the root of endemic, low-level violence and chronic instability of nomadic societies… when [such] occurred, [it] tore at the heart of the established social order, divided families, caused the abandonment of poor relatives, and broke up tribes; at the same time, these crises released new energies closely connected with state formation [elsewhere]."[518]

This certainly seems to explain the rise of "inchoate state" structures amongst the Scythians.[519] Climactic Studies of Central Asia show a dry period occurring across the Steppe from 1000BCE to 700BCE.[520] The conflict produced in this period likely

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[514] (Barfield, 1981, p. 46)
[515] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 314)
[516] (Barfield, 1981, p. 47)
[517] (Burnham, 1979)
[518] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 14)
[519] (Claessen & Skalnik, 2011, p. 266)
[520] (Wolf, et al., 2016, p. 142)

transformed the Andronovo Cultural Space of the Central Eurasian Steppe into the more *tangible* East Iranian nomadic confederation of Herodotus's writings.[521] As with later steppe empires, Scythian society was organised between the "pure nomads" of the Σκωλοτοι (*Scōlatoi* – "Royals") and the Γεωργοι (*Geōrgoi*), those conquered sedentary peoples who provided the confederation with sustenance.[522] Likewise, as with later Empires, life on the steppe was uniform in its treatment of gender or role in society, with every member of the Confederation, man or woman, serving as a warrior. Such led to the identification of the Scythian women as *Amazones* in the histories of Alexander the Great.[523] There was also no distinction as to ethnicity, with all tribes formed integrating social strata, which brought non-kinship groups into the same political organisation through the rubric of being "guests" with mutual obligations owed to the "host".[524]

In *Empires of the Silk Road*, Christopher Beckwith refers to this common culture as the *Central Eurasian Culture Complex* – ascribing to it common social technologies such as the "orphan myth", a hierarchical distribution of tribute, and the *Comitatus*, or "sworn brotherhood" – all of which form the basis of politics on the Steppe.[525] Such socio-political institutions would be spread across the Steppe and define Steppe politics for centuries:

> "Long after the genetic imprint of the original immigrant chiefs faded away, the system of alliances, obligations, myths, and rituals that they introduced was still being passed on from generation to generation"[526]

The transmission of Scythian material and social technologies across the entire steppe would give rise to a set of common pastoralist motifs and inferred principles that would add to the substrate of later Steppe culture.[527] These cultural myths, together with the iconic "animal style" of the pastoral motifs, present the emergence of a wider socio-

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[521] (Cunliffe, 2019, p. 57)
[522] (Melyukova, 1990)
[523] (Harl, 2023, p. 86)
[524] (Sinor, 1990, p. 169)
[525] (Beckwith, 2009, p. 1)
[526] (Anthony, 2010, p. 636). See also the discussion on Guest-Host relationships as social technology.
[527] (Shelach, 2005, p. 46)

religious ideology on the Steppe.[528] Heroic myths about orphans paint a broader picture of group integration, and the emphasis on brotherhood through contract rather than sanguinity lends itself to the importance of trans-Steppe diplomacy.[529] Thus, Steppe ideology should not be seen as the product of a single group, but rather emerged out of the linguistic and folkloric synthesis taking place on the Eastern Steppe as a product of transcultural *nomadization*.[530] Naturally, this ideology took on an increasingly religious nature based upon the single "transcendent feature" common in all religions, but particularly omnipresent on the Steppe – the sky – known as 𐰚𐰇𐰚 (*Tengri*) in Old Turkic.[531]

The fact that *Tengrism* is a term of Turkic etymology paints the broad history of the Steppe thereafter as being subject to the cultural and linguistic dominance of its eastern periphery. As the Scythian Horizon faded on the Steppe,[532] the Turks – agriculturalists from northern China – gradually emerged as the culturally dominant force on the Steppe.[533] Forced into the steppe by the encroaching armies of the Chinese Qin Dynasty under the command of General 蒙恬 (*Meng Tian*), the Turks *nomadized*. In moving out of Ordos and into the

Steppe, the Turks joined the multitude of nomadic peoples on the periphery, many of whose place in the historical record had yet to be written; the Mongols, the Manchus and the Magyars (Hungarians).[534] The increasingly common linguistic and ideological space of

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[528] (Beckwith, 2009, p. 13)
[529] (Beckwith, 1993, p. 30)
[530] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 6)
[531] (Dallos, 2020, p. 71)
[532] Per (Kipfer, 2018), *Horizon* is defined as "Any artifact, art style, or other cultural trait that has extensive geographical distribution but a limited time span."
[533] Per (Uchiyama, et al., 2020); "The Proto-Turkic subsistence strategy included an agricultural component… It is likely that the subsistence of the Early Proto-Turkic speakers was based on a combination of hunting–gathering and agriculture, with a later shift to nomadic pastoralism as an economy basis, partly owing to the interaction of the Late Proto-Turkic groups with the Iranian-speaking herders of the Eastern Steppe."
[534] Per (Janhunen, 2009, p. 74) on the Uralic Languages not originating in the Urals, but in the Baikal Region; "The east-to-west geographical sequence of the branches of Uralic, extending from the Baikal region to the Baltic Sea was complete by the Iron Age… Hungarian (of the Mansic branch) was absorbed into the steppe under the impact of Turkic and [later] transplanted into Pannonia, where it replaced a number of earlier Indo-European languages." This would also provide an explanation for why Hungarian political culture so closely mirrored Steppe polities further east.

the northern steppe meant that unification in the face of Qin aggression was inevitable.[535]

When such occurred, it occurred as the multi-ethnic confederation of 匈奴 (*Hun-nu*,

"Huns" pronounced *Xiōng-nù* in Modern Standard Mandarin Chinese, by which it is

widely known).[536]

Diplomacy between pastoralist tribes was a necessity in the shared space, and as a result of

the *Scythian Horizon*, a common culture had already emerged on the Steppe to facilitate

such.[537] The introduction of a *Crisis*, then, applied *formative* pressures to the

geographically dispersed community.[538] From that point, it merely fell to "certain men" of

"wealth or power" to emerge as leaders of loose confederations – replicating "local politics

at ever higher levels of incorporation".[539] Per the *Steppe Tradition*, the leader of such

confederations was not merely the leader of the military effort, but also the proprietor and

distributor of the spoils of conquest – including slaves.[540] Thus, early "government" on the

Steppe emerges as a hierarchical system of norms regulating the distribution of *loot*.[541]

Such necessitated the investiture of a charismatic leader with temporal and corporal

authority, and a stable system of succession to act as foundation for the entire system.[542]

This appears to be the state of the Xiong-nu Confederation under the leadership of 頭曼

(*Doman*, later *Tóumàn* in Modern Standard Mandarin or *Teoman* in Turkish).[543]

It was Teoman's son Modun 冒頓 (*Modun* later *Màodùn* or *Metehan*), however, who

would develop an institutionally stable polity.[544] The exact process by which this occurred

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535 Prolonged contact between Uralic, Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Japonic and Koreanic
is likely the explanation for the shared words and grammatical features that formed the
now discredited *Altaic Language Family*. Per (Pereltsvaig, 2020, p. 411) "we can observe
convergence rather than divergence… a pattern that is explainable by borrowing and
diffusion rather than a common descent".
536 (Simmons & Auken, 2014, p. 114)
537 (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 52)
538 (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 17)
539 (Barfield, 1981, p. 45)
540 (Crossley, 1981, p. 1473)
541 (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 17)
542 (Crossley, 1981, p. 1473)
543 (220–209 BCE)
544 (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 174)

is unknown, but per Di Cosmo, it was, at the very least, a "struggle sustained by Modun…
directed primarily against the traditional tribal aristocracy… carried out by [an] efficient,
totally loyal, disciplined bodyguard".[545] This bodyguard, or *Comitatus*, was ultimately the
result of the *crisis* of the ongoing invasion of the Steppe by the Qin Dynasty.[546] This crisis,
which saw the mass displacement of people northward, led to the rapid *militarization* of
the Steppe itself. In such *Hobbesian* circumstances, every steppe pastoralist became a
professional solider or a willing bureaucrat for those that would guarantee their safety and
longevity. As such, traditional blood hierarchies came under the corrosive effects of a
wartime economy.[547] Those who left their family or tribal band in service of the another
were often adopted as part of his personal patrimony – an extension of the pre-existing
Indo-European "guest-host" system.[548] The traditional hierarchy was thus increasingly
relegated into irrelevance as the meritocratic *and* patrimonial *Comitatus* served as the *hand*
of the tribal leader in all affairs.

Having gained power in a *Patricidal Coup D'etat*, Modun began to reorganise the
Confederation, limiting its administrative elite and taking the an imperial title recorded in
Chinese sources as 赛犁孤塗單于 (a Sinitic approximation of *Tengri'si Qut Khagan* –

"(by) Heaven's fortune, Chief of Chiefs").[549] Whilst it can be tempting to relate such

developments to the concept of 天子 (*Tiānzi* – "Son of Heaven") in Chinese political

theory, such concepts may have emerged organically from the Steppe as *Tengrism* further
consolidated.[550] In addition, "the political histories of China and the steppe … [are of]
strengthening and weakening, centralizing and decentralizing each other".[551] For this

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[545] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 186)
[546] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 17)
[547] (Beckwith, 2009, p. 33)
[548] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 179)
[549] Rendered in Mandarin as: Chēnglí Gūtú Chányú. In Early Middle Chinese, Chányu was
pronounced "Darghwa", and thus likely represented "Darugha", a title still in use on the
steppe. This is still rendered today as Тэнгэрийн хүүхэд Даргач (Tengerinyn Khokhud
Dargač) in Mongolian. Altaicist Alexander Volvin offers an alternative expalantion
whereby 于 (*wa) is a mistaken rendering of 干 (*khan), thus *Khaghan*. (Vovin, 2007, p.
177). I have opted for the second option, as it explains the emergence of title from an
otherwise nebulous origin.
[550] (Golden, 1982, p. 44)
[551] (Crossley, 1981, p. 1473)

reason, any institutional borrowing should be seen as part of a "specific Sino–Inner Asian tradition of "mixed" institutions".[552] The Turco-Mongol Cardinal Colours, for example, are an almost direct borrowing of the 五行 (*Wǔxíng*, "Five Agents") of Chinese

Metaphisics.[553] It is from Gold's central and imperial position in the hierarchy, flanked by Black (north), Blue (East), Red (South) and White (West), that the later Golden Horde, Blue Horde and White Horde of Tatary are derived – albeit with the north-south axis mirrored from the perspective of the Steppe.[554]
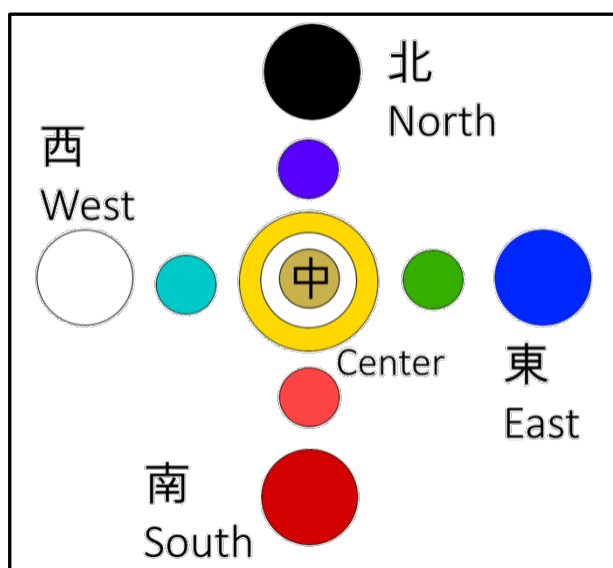

Figure 5 – The Wuxing System of Cardinal Colours. (Matoaya, 2020)

Yet China alone doesn't pain the full picture – Inner Eurasian empires, whilst representative of a particular *institutional type*, were still just as adoptive of social and political technologies from across the entire periphery.[555] The transformation of the Xiong-nu into a trade-based taxation empire towards the end of its existence is almost certainly an innovation that emerged in the expansion of Xiong-nu power into the Sogdian markets of Central Asia.[556] There are also some differences in State formation. Qin centralisation

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[552] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 173)
[553] (Theobald, 2011)
[554] (Kim, 2013, p. 25)
[555] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 320)
[556] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 205)

happened as a result of the expansion of formerly exclusive elite roles to commoners.[557] The centralisation of the Xiong-nu happened as the result of a violent revolt against the established tradition.[558] It was thus motivated not by the need to *militarise* a civilian force, but rather to *administer* a force that was already dualistic in its role.

To this end, Modun subordinated the remaining tribal chieftains to the super-tribal structure, now represented by the *Tengrisi Khagan* and his descendants – the "sacral bloodline" of the new ideology.[559] This ideology, from which all of the Xiong-nu chiefs (to the lowest level) drew their *traditional authority*, was reinforced through Empire-wide rituals of veneration conducted at dawn and sunset.[560] Succession was legitimated through a system of dual kingship, with the dynastically appointed 屠耆 (Turkic: *Doğri*, Sino: *Túqí* – "Wise [King]") of the Left ("East") being representative of the *Yang* (sunrise, growth, generation) and thus worthy to command the army and herald a new dynastic age.[561] The *Doğri* of the Right (West), on the other hand, served *in theory* to bridge the gap between the sacred and the secular, managing the bureaucracy of the polity, but not furnishing a successor.[562]

Below the *Doğri* sat the 24-strong aristocratic tribal council, with each tribe represented by a ⟨ᛏᛠᚺᛞ⟩ (*Tamga*, royal seal) and a tribal totem in the ubiquitous post-Scythian animal style.[563] The means by which such chiefs were incorporated was not necessarily violent. Modun understood the need to make the system participatory, and thus drew the chiefs away from their traditional power bases and into the machinery of government as fully-fledged members of the imperial aristocracy.[564] Through the creation of an ideologically bound and heterogenous ruling class, Modun achieved two important administrative feats. On one hand, he was able to coup-proof the *Golden Lineage* against potential challengers

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[557] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 217)
[558] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 186)
[559] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 17)
[560] (Miller, 2024, p. 83)
[561] (Miller, 2009, p. 83)
[562] (Gyöffrey, 1994, p. 89); this system is observable in all Turkic states, including the later Magyars.
[563] Per (Golden, 1982, p. 44), the Totem of the Magyars, for example, was the legendary *Turul* bird, which remains a national symbol of Hungary to this day.
[564] (Harl, 2023, p. 99)

from within the "native" Hunnic clan.[565] On the other hand, Modun created a system wherein the incorporated elite relied upon the Empire for their own survival vis-à-vis challengers from within their own clans.[566]

Another benefit of Empire was inter-clan diplomacy. To each of the incorporated chiefs, Modun assigned appanages, or *Uluses* – general patterns of movement and people within which they could "follow grass and water and move in migration".[567] The mobile nature of the *Ulus* is important to note here, as the *Ulus* represented not as a defined territorial space, but rather as a division of the populace. As noted by Ibn Khaldun:

> "We saw a vast city on the move with its inhabitants, with mosques and bazaars in it, the smoke of the kitchens rising in the air (for they cook while on the march), and horse drawn wagons transporting the people…"[568]

Where necessary for the purposes of imperial administration, such populations were resettled.[569] With the Empire being so dispersed, the institution of 𐰑𐰆𐰕𐰢𐰴𐰣 (*Kurultai* – "feast, meeting") provided for the seasonal meetings of the elite and the bureaucracy.[570] Like the later Mongol institution of the same name, the *Kurultai* served the dual function of facilitating elite cooperation whilst enforcing hierarchy and the suzerainty of the sacral bloodline.[571]

To each of the 24 chiefs, Modun also assigned bureaucratic 骨都 (*Qutlug, Güdū*),[572]

described as being "ministers… [from] lineages not of the imperial aristocratic clans… [made] to *assist* in governing [their territorially assigned apanages]".[573] Loyal directly to the *Khagan*, the *Qutlug* acted as political commissars – maintaining the right "sanctified by

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[565] (Golden, 1982, p. 60)
[566] (Gyöffrey, 1994, p. 90)
[567] (Miller, 2009, p. 86)
[568] (Christian, 1988, p. 145)
[569] (Miller, 2024, p. 165)
[570] (Miller, 2024, p. 83)
[571] (Hodous, 2012, p. 89)
[572] This corresponds to the Classical Mongolian kutuktu, Uyghur kutulu and Turkic kutluğ, meaning "blessed" or "appointed" "ones".
[573] (Miller, 2009, p. 87)

heaven" to depose the traditional aristocracy in cases of insubordination.[574] In such cases, the possession of diplomatic hostages – a child or wife of one of the chiefs – was effective leverage.[575] Such leverage formed the *Comitatus* of the *Khagan*, which came to be increasingly staffed by such conquered peoples whose limited authority was dependent on the *Khagan*.[576] Hostage taking itself had long been "an integral part of diplomatic relations" in the Chinese States to the South – wherein such hostages were integrated into the Royal Court.[577] This was no different on the steppe, but the dualistic nature of Steppe society – by which ever member of the horde must *draw the bow and tend the hearth* – required that such hostages also become warriors for the *Khagan*.[578] *The Steppe may have been vast, but the yoke of the Xiong-nu was heavy.*

Added to the dualistic system was a decimal-based census for mobilisation and a system of property law that would remain dominate on the Steppe until the 20th Century.[579] In the words of Kenneth W. Harl, Modun, unlike his contemporaries, "grasped the need for the two pillars of every authoritarian regime, an army and bureaucracy", and that such be organised without reference to ethnicity or clan.[580] Such systems provided immense manpower which was readily used in both warfare and in the construction of ideological edifices throughout the Orkhorn Valley, such as the recently discovered Talyn Gurvan Kherem site.[581] Settled communities also appeared – such as the "Ivolga Village Complex" on the shores of Lake Baikal – and did so mostly as trade nodes between the Steppe and the Forest Zone of Siberia.[582] Yet these nodes also suggest a gradual transformation of the Xiong-nu from a "parasitic" *Tributary Empire* into a *Direct Taxation Empire* (see Part 3.4) – a transformation that ultimately was not achieved by the Xiong-nu, but by its later successors.[583]

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[574] (Kim, 2013, p. 21)
[575] (Miller, 2024, p. 39)
[576] (Zhu, 2021, p. 564)
[577] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 269)
[578] (Miller, 2024, p. 55)
[579] (Miller, 2009, p. 86)
[580] (Harl, 2023, p. 98)
[581] (Ochir, et al., 2024)
[582] (Miller, 2024, p. 98)
[583] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 34)

Decimalization and territorial organisation allowed the network of *Qutlug* to manage tribute and punishment, which – like land – was gathered and administered collectively .[584] The ranking of chiefs by their potential contributions to the State (from tens to tens of thousands) also fostered "a pervasive hierarchical framework that incorporated even petty local leaders who directed but a few dozen households".[585] Nonetheless, the mobilisation potential of the Xiong-nu state was so effective that it ultimately hold the tide against the invasion; forcing the Chinese to abandon "pretensions to build a truly universal empire" and instead begin constructions on what is now known as the Great Wall of China.[586]

When the Qin Dynasty collapsed, the Xiongnu took advantage of the crisis to establish hegemony over the Steppe and partially vassalize the successor Han Dynasty.[587] Heavily outnumbered by the Chinese (1 million : 54 million), the Xiong-nu had little chance of conquering, occupying or administering the Han territories. Instead, the Xiong-nu employed terror tactics, launching violent raids along the border as a means of coercing the Court in distant Chang'an[588] to pay tribute.[589] For the Han, the situation was understood in modern International Relations terminology as a kind of "acknowledged bipolarity".[590] Nonetheless the flow of tribute and imperial wives continued only northwards, and would do so for another 149 years.[591]

The critical flaw in the Xiongnu State, however, was the very expansionist pressures that had brought it into existence. The process of *Crisis, Militarisation, and Centralisation* had resulted in the creation of a *Nomas ex Mīlitārium* – a polity that emerged out of the expansion of the bureaucratic *Comitatus* and its triumph over the existing aristocracy.[592] Yet the loyalty of the *Comitatus* and the wider bureaucratic class was first and foremost "bought" – with the power of the Khagan "[resting] on the flow of gifts from the Han

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[584] (Krader, 1958, p. 97)
[585] (Miller, 2024, p. 100)
[586] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 91)
[587] (Miller, 2009, p. 93)

[588] 長安, now known as西安 *Xī'ān*.

[589] (Barfield, 1981, p. 55)
[590] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 96)
[591] Per (Barfield, 1981, p. 56), the "five baits" economic policy of the Han Dynasty aimed to weaken the Xiongnu by making them docile and reliant on subsidiaries.
[592] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 34)

emperor".[593] A cycle developed wherein the Khagan, needing to pay off his follows, would raid the periphery; only for the confederation, and thus the distributions of the khagan, to grow as a result. In the words of Di Cosmo, "The first "cry" of a newly born inner Asian state was one of great, insatiable hunger".[594]

Rule on the Steppe might have been effective, but it was extremely fragile. Any interruption in the flow of goods to the *Khagan* and their subsequent redistribution would cause the collapse of the polity as a whole.[595] Thus, the cancellation of tribute and rebellion by the Han in 133BC thus increased immeasurably the financial stresses on the Steppe Empire, sending the Xiong-nu into an internal crisis from which they would never recover.[596] With tribute no longer flowing to the *Khagan*, the Han started sponsoring lower level bureaucrats and princes of the line.[597] By 49AD, the Xiong-nu had fragmented into a number of competing entities; the rising Mongolic Xianbei in the East,[598] the Southern Xiong-nu –a tributary of the Han – and the so-called "Northern Xiong-nu", for whom the Han record ceases following their migration into Central Asia "as far as Sogdiana".[599]

These represent three outcomes of collapsing Steppe Empires; Revolution, Subornation or Migration into another part of the periphery in search of weaker states to plunder.[600] In the East, the system collapsed entirely, with the followers of the *Khagan* shifting their loyalty to the Xianbei – who arose out of the *Comitatus* with a fresh mandate of empire.[601] In the South, elements of the Xiong-nu entered into a deal with the Han Dynasty, by which they would secure the border in exchange for sustenance – an "inner frontier stategy" from the point of view of the Sedentary States.[602] The remaining Xiong-nu moved west, pillaging

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[593] (Harl, 2023, p. 101)
[594] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 23)
[595] (Harl, 2023, p. 111)
[596] (Beckwith, 2009, p. 88)
[597] (Harl, 2023, p. 111)
[598] (Miller, 2009, p. 52); "10,000 remaining tribes of the Xiongnu, in the wake of the demise of Xiongnu hegemony, proceeded to call themselves Xianbei."
[599] (Beckwith, 2009, p. 89)
[600] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 311)
[601] (Miller, 2009, p. 52)
[602] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 54)

their way through the sedentary states along the periphery and ultimately into the pages of Roman History where they became known as the *Huns*.[603]

Figure 6 – The World at the time of the Collapse of the Xiong-nu, showing the Han Dynasty (Red), Gupta Empire (Green), Sassanid Empire (Orange) with the transitional zone of Sogdiana (yellow) and the Greco-Roman periphery (Purple). (Miller, 2024, p. 211)

Whilst the hegemony of the Xiong-nu on the Steppe had largely faded by the end of the 1st Century AD, their legacy would live on. The Xiong-nu had pioneered the means by which a Steppe polity could be maintained – the extraction of tribute from the periphery, the flow of that tribute through a system of ranks organised around a sacral kingship, and a triarchic system of succession.[604] The concept of the sacral bloodline and its manifestation in a *Khagan* (confirmed by victory) would form a "ideology in reserve" for future empires.[605] Such institutions would be part of every Steppe Empire thereafter, and are "found in later

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[603] (Kim, 2013, p. 31)
[604] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 150)
[605] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 22)

Inner Asian states [as late as the Qing Dynasty]".[606] Yet their successful implementation was often limited, with the intervening Xianbei (93-234) and Rouran Khaganates (330-555) lacking the same level of cohesiveness seen in the Xiong-nu.[607] It was thus not until the rise of the Göktürks that Xiong-nu tradition - "a supple political order and a salient political culture" – was reborn.[608]

The Göktürk Khaganate (552AD–603AD) would succeed where the Xiong-nu had failed; establishing a system of customs across the entirety of the Steppe, and thus avoiding the pitfalls of a purely tributary system.[609] The rise of the Göktürks also concluded the gradual *Turkification* of the Steppe, concluding the process that had begun under the Xiong-nu and establishing a cultural space extending from Siberia to the Balkans that lasts until this day.[610] Beyond such demographic changes, however, the Göktürk maintained and expanded upon the "reigns of rulership" established by the Xiong-nu.[611] It is in the Göktürk period that the first use of material propaganda can be observed, with Bilge Khan erecting monumental inscriptions in Old Turkic that "stressed how good kaghans gained access to Chinese markets and secured prosperity for their people, while bad ones fought among themselves and neglected the welfare of the people".[612]

Here again, a divergence from the Chinese tradition can be seen – with the legitimacy of the Khans resting on public welfare rather than a strict reading of the mandate of heaven.[613] They passed such a legacy to the Greco-Buddhist 大遼 (*Dà Líao*) Kara Khitai (916–1218), and ultimately, the Mongols (1206-1294).[614] Like his predecessors, the Khitan leader Abaoji had begun his rise to power through a bureaucratizing revolution and a shift towards the model of organisation begun under the Xiong-nu.[615] The Khitans went further, however, in recognising the need for *Dual Administration* between the sedentary and non-

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[606] (Di Cosmo, 2002, p. 177)
[607] (Miller, 2024, p. 237)
[608] (Miller, 2024, p. 98)
[609] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 30)
[610] (Golden, 2011, p. 140)
[611] (Miller, 2024, p. 239)
[612] (Harl, 2023, p. 222)
[613] (Miller, 2024, p. 240)
[614] (Golden, 2011, p. 152)
[615] (Harl, 2023, p. 268)

sedentary parts of the Empire.[616] Nonetheless, they still relied heavily on tribute, a factor that only began to fade with the arrival of the Mongols, who finally broke with reliance on tribute and shifted to the *direct taxation* of their subjects through middlemen known as *Bašqaqlar*.[617] Nonetheless, the through-line was *plunder* – the object of which merely shifted from the uncontrolled periphery to the subjects of the Empire itself.

The Mongols, the last great Steppe Empire, would collapse into infighting by the 15th Century, with Steppe trade itself vanishing as a consequence of the Columbian exchange.[618] Despite this, their legacy, the *Chinggisid Dispensation*, lasted until the Steppe was reorganised once more under the Russian (1865-1917) and Soviet (1922-1989) Empires.[619] Even then, the Russian Empire, like its Qing Counterparts in the east, can be seen as the product of the institutional development of the Steppe – part of what Iver B. Neumann and Einer Wigan call the "Steppe Tradition".[620] The following sub-chapter will analyse this tradition in full, comparing it to the sedentary tradition of the European peninsula.

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[616] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 31)
[617] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 35)
[618] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 595)
[619] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 596)
[620] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018)

3.3 The Pre-Modern Steppe Tradition

The examination of the Xiong-nu and their successor states provides a "ideal type" of polity organised in the Steppe Tradition (see **Table 3**). As a tool of analysis, Nicola Di Cosmo periodizes the history of the Steppe into "Imperial Types" based on their Productive Base.[621] David Christian provides an alternative model based on four stages of innovation on the Steppe – *Hunting, Pastoralism, Agrarian Autocracy,* and *Command Economy*.[622] **Table 2** demonstrates a synthesis of the two models.

Table 2: Steppe Empires organised according to their Productive Base:

Imperial Type:	Empires:
Tribute Empires (209BC – 551AD)	Xiong-nu, Wuhuan, Xianbei, Rouran
Trade-Tribute Empires (551-907)	Gökturks, Tibetans, Uyghurs
Dual Administration Empires (907-1259)	Khitan Liao, Jurchen Jin, Early Mongols
Direct-Taxation Empires (1260-1796)	Yuan Dynasty, Early Ottomans, Muscovy
Hybridizing Empires (1796-1920)	Ottomans, Qing China, Petrine Russia
Eurasian Empire (1920-1989)	Soviet Union, PRC, Russia (aspirational)
(Neo-)Beylik (209BC-present)	Anatolians, Central Asia, Russia (current)

Tribute Polities: The earliest form of Steppe Polity; a polity organised around the ability of its leadership to extract tribute from the sedentary states. Such polities are thus entirely dependent on the continued flow of tribute, and are often termed "Shadow Empires".[623] As shown in the example of the Xiong-nu, such polities emerge out of a crisis on the steppe (military, environmental or other) which triggers the competitive militarisation of the steppe, ultimately creating the conditions of "state" emergence around a Charismatic leader in the bureaucratic *Comitatus*. The Charismatic Leader then endows himself with a heavenly mandate, consecrating a sacral bloodline and transforming the Charismatic Authority into Traditional Authority. The institutionalisation of a bureaucratic class, a stable system of ranks, and a unified social and material culture transform the loose Steppe Confederation into an Empire. Such a system further develops over time, even as its core remains functionally the same. A general hierarchy is provided in **Figure 7**.

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[621] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 25)
[622] (Christian, 1992, p. 173)
[623] (Barfield, 1989, p. 10)

Table 3: Comparison of "Ideal Type" Sedentary and Steppe Traditions:

Political Trait:	Sedentary Tradition:	Steppe Tradition:
Financial Base	Agriculture and Production	Pastoralism and Tribute
Administration	*Polis*: A sedentary administrative centre supported by the inflow of surplus value of surrounding territories. Authority in enforced from the outside-in: Borders become markers of State Authority for the collection of taxes and customs.	*Nomas*: A mobile administrative centre sustained by pastoral migration and the collection of revenues from sedentary posts. Borderless and radial in authority.
Territoriality	*Fixed*: Households form Villages, which in turn form Regions. Dissolution results in authority diverging to territorial divisions. Successor states emerge from the geography itself.	*Fluid*: Kinship Groups form Clans, which in turn form *Ulus*. Dissolution results in the emergence of migratory socio-kinship groups not tied to any particular territory.
Rule	*Feudal*: Rule is largely rules-based and by consultation. The ruler is not absolute and must consult with the estates of the realm. Such is as a result of incorporation being a matter of elite bargaining.	*Decretal:* Due to the contingencies of formation, rule is largely patrimonial and by decree. The ruler is the absolute sovereign and is unbound by nobility or clergy.
Foreign Policy	*Defensive*: Border fortifications serve to defend against the territorial ambitions of other states, and to exercise customs.	*Offensive*: The *Nomas* is borderless, and functions more as a zone of operation that expands and shrinks according to the authority of the steppe polity.
International Outlook	*Sovereign*: Sovereign rights are recognised as permanent, even whilst	*Suzerain*: Sovereign rights are conditional and "digital". All territory by-default belongs to

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	they can be "exchanged". Polities exist on an "analogue spectrum" of power.	the Khagan, who assigns such temporarily and conditionally.
Material Capital	*Accumulated*: Sedentarism allows for the accumulation of material wealth. Material Wealth is owned dynastically and passes down in the family line. Private or familial property is the norm.	*Distributed*: Nomadism means that material wealth cannot be hoarded to the same degree. The system of "rule by patronage" means that material wealth must be distributed to new followers.
Elite	*Blue*: Core elites do not marry peripheral elites, as property is tied to dynasties and therefore can be lost.	*Black*: Core elites often intermarry with peripheral elites, as all elites are equally subject to the supreme rule of the Khagan.
Identity	*National*: Despite being far less homogenous than today's nation states, Sedentary Kingdoms were nonetheless organised around a primary ethnic group. In addition, the common geographic space and shared traditions provided for the emergence of a "national" culture.	*Patrimonial*: Lacking a central *Polis*, the Steppe polity derived its identity not from a shared geographic space or culture, but rather from a system of loyalty to the Khagan. Administrative costs will always be higher than the income provided by pastoralism, as such, Steppe entities are necessarily multiethnic.
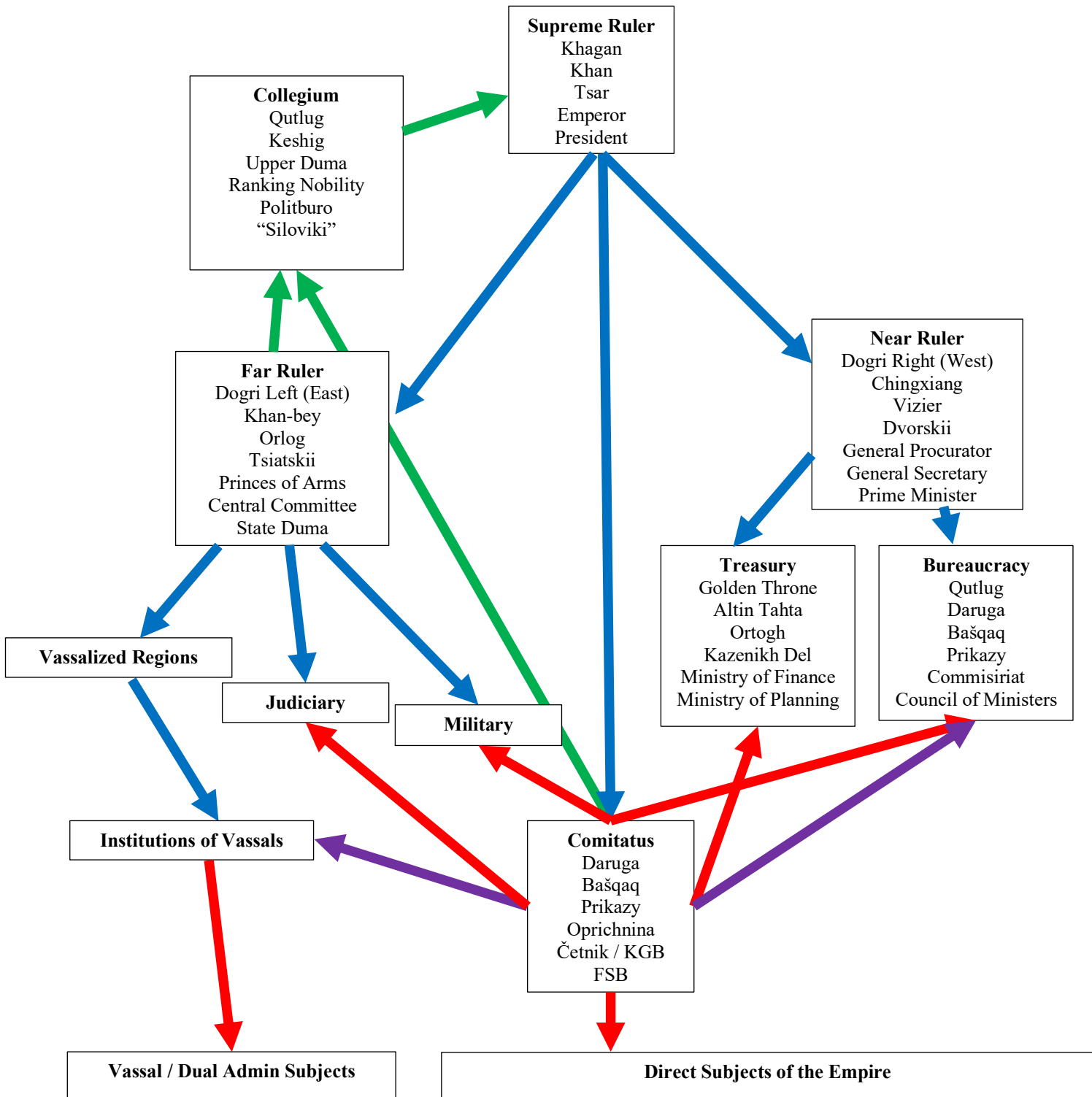
Figure 7 *– The Basic Structure of all Steppe Empires, showing the patrimonial power from the leader (blue) and oversight (red) of all devolved bodies through the Comitatus. The dual near-far (east-west, "civil-military") structure is preserved, as well as the Collegium as being an institutional outgrowth of the comitatus and the bureaucratic bodies (green). The preservation of patrimonial power through the composition of key parts of government by the Comitatus is also indicated (purple).*

Trade-Tribute Empires: The second kind of Empire described by Di Cosmo and pioneered by the Göktürks. Such empires still rely upon tribute, but are increasingly sustained by the taxation of Steppe trade (such being the shortest route between the edges of the periphery). The close interaction of such empires with states on the periphery also leads to the translation of steppe politics into a legalistic form understandable by their sedentary partners, even whilst the administration remains largely patrimonial.[624] This interaction with the politics of the sedentary changes both the *Nomas* and the *Polis*; the *Nomas* adopts the material and political culture of the *Polis*, whilst the *Polis* itself becomes increasingly centralised in order to sustain the *Nomas*. Such certainly occurred under the Göktürks, who both shaped and we shaped by the policies of the sedentary Sogdians and Byzantines.[625]

Dual Administration Empires: The end result of Steppe Empires interacting with peripheral polities is their involvement in the politics of the periphery itself. Trade and tribute remain the primary source of income, but such are increasingly complimented by the direct taxation of imperial subjects through a separate administration.[626] The most successful incarnation of this system is in the Khitan Liao Dynasty, wherein the Right (south-west) King governed the occupied sedentary territories with the help of native Han – leaving the Left (north-east) King to hold the role of a traditional steppe ruler.[627] Within the Han Territories, the mode of government remained "[an] imitation of a Tang [Dynasty] model".[628] The Khitans ruled a Steppe Empire, but knew the usefulness of incorporating sedentary practices whilst keeping their institutions in place.

Direct Taxation Empires: The final of the four "stages of institutional evolution" as described by Di Cosmo. Direct Taxation Empires, such as the early Mongol Empire, permanently did away with tribute as a source of revenue, instead relying on the "direct exploitation of the settled peoples" and the manipulation of trade.[629] As with the Xiong-nu, Charismatic rule was paired with a form of Traditional Authority – with the addition of a

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[624] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 31)
[625] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 117)
[626] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 32)
[627] (Twitchett & Tietze, 1994, p. 51)
[628] (Twitchett & Tietze, 1994, p. 78)
[629] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)

ritual calling of the *Kurultai* serving to confirm the investiture of the sacral bloodline.[630] Nonetheless, despite great strides, the central administration ultimately failed to cultivate a unified "state culture" and a stable system of succession.[631] Consequently "tension amongst imperial princes [and the entrenched bureaucratic class]" led to the Empire collapsing in the wake of the death of Möngke Khan in 1251.[632] Had the Mongols cultivated a lasting "state culture", then their classification would have extended into what I refer to as a *Eurasian Empire*.

Hybridizing Empires: In her concluding remarks, Di Cosmo also alludes to the Qing Dynasty as having achieved "a level of social and political integration between conquerors and conquered far higher than that of earlier inner Asian polities" whilst maintaining "[key] features of the inner Asian tradition".[633] Nomadic civilisations, lacking periphery-applicable institutions, typically adopt the customs and governing styles of the civilisations they conquer.[634] The conquest of China by the Mongols led to the creation of the Yuan Dynasty, which rapidly Sinicized within three generations.[635] The Magyars, who migrated out of Siberia and into the Pannonian basin, likewise adopted the customs of Europe, and "Within [an] extremely short time [transformed into] a Christian State which succeeded in joining the mediaeval European community".[636] *Hybridizing Empires* are therefore those Steppe polities that are in the process of adopting institutions from conquered Sedentary States. In other words, they are not representative of either extreme, but rather represent a transitional midpoint in the process of adoption of sedentary practices by Steppe Empires.

The endpoint, naturally, is and the *sedentarisation* of the Steppe Empire and its suborning into the regional order – a process by which the Steppe practices become "vestigial or merely symbolic" or fade altogether.[637] The case of Hungary and its transformation into a typical state in Europe offers an example of the end point of such transformations –

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[630] (Hope, 2012, p. 87)
[631] (Allsen, 2001, p. 200)
[632] (Allsen, 2001, p. 17)
[633] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 36)
[634] Ibn Khaldun, as translated in (Issawi, 1950, p. 309).
[635] (Mote, 1999, p. 616)
[636] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 251)
[637] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 37)

wherein the legacy of the Steppe Tradition is almost indiscernible.[638] That said, even after adopting the religion and technologies of the regional order in which their resided, the Hungarians retained many administrative quirks that can only be explained by the continued existence of the Steppe Tradition. The same can be said of the Ottomans, who in many ways readopted the institutions of the Seljuqs. Both are worth exploring briefly.

Figure 8 – The Eurasian Steppe Rider. Per (Caballeros, 2013)..

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[638] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 250)

3.4 When Steppe Empires Hybridize: Hungary and the Ottomans

Per Di Cosmo, the process of *Hybridization* coincides with *Sedentization*, yet the cases of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire offer vastly different outcomes.[639] On closer inspection, however, it appears that the leading difference between the two Empires was the regional order within which both empires found themselves. That Magyars, in the Carpathian Basin, were forced to integrate into the European State System, which involved the shift from *Nomas* to *Polis* (a factor that ultimately resulted in the creation of a solidified Hungarian national identity), and the conversion to Christianity. In the case of the Ottomans, there was more room to maintain the *Steppe Tradition* – albeit with some concessions to Islam and an existing Anatolia-Levantine State System.[640] Let's begin with the Hungarians.

As stated previously, the Magyars (and "Uralic" peoples more generally) have their origins in the forest zone of East Siberia.[641] Settled on the shores of Lake Baikal, the Magyars nonetheless kept trade links with the Steppe, and ultimately *Nomaditized*; adopting the social and material technologies of their neighbours as they migrated west.[642] For some time, the Magyars were confederates of the Judeo-Turkic Khazars, and shared in their institutional development on the Pontic Steppe.[643] Disagreements over religious identity and defence priorities, however, led to the Magyars moving west. This decision set in motion a transformative process that saw the Magyars adopt *territoriality*, along with the language and international customs of Central European Christendom.

Nonetheless, at the time the Magyars arrived in the Pannonian Basin in the 9th Century CE, they were indistinguishable from other Turkic Steppe polities.[644] Like those other steppe regimes, the Magyars possessed a triarchy formed by a Supreme Sacral Ruler (*Kende*), a

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[639] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 37)

[640] In *Levant: Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*, Philip Mansel discusses the existence of a broad system of interstate relations based on city-state interactions which I have termed here the "Anatolia-Levantine State System". (Mansel, 2010, p. 47)

[641] (Janhunen, 2009, p. 74)

[642] Per (Török, 2023, p. 1355); "It seems feasible [based on genetic and linguistic evidence] that on their way [west], the Xiong-nu integrated a significant part of the Ugric-speaking communities. As a result, these communities left their homes and moved together with their new masters."

[643] (Engel, 2001, p. 16)

[644] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 245)

dynastic and military ruler (*Gyula*), and an administrative or judicial ruler (*Horka*).[645] As in the case of the Xiong-nu, the *Kende* ruled over a confederation of seven to ten tribes, mostly of Oghuric Turkic origin, and did so with the recognisable guarantees of Steppe Tradition – the *carrot* of distributed tribute and the *stick* of the loyal *Comitatus*.[646] The name *On Oghur* (Old Turkic: "Ten Oghur Tribes") gradually became transcribed in Latin as *Unugari* and ultimately is the source of the name "Hungary".[647]

At the time of their entry into Europe, the Hungarians appear to have taken the form of a pure *Tribute Empire* – with the *Kende* relying on *Kalandozások* ("adventures, raids") into the sedentary nations of Europe in order to extract tribute and secure his rule.[648] With the conquest of the Carpathian Basin, the polity transformed into a *Dual-Administration Empire*; the native Slavic tribes forming an agricultural class that was ruled over by the Hungarians – who otherwise continued their raids westward.[649] Such a transformation impacted the form of government significantly. The *Horka*, as the administrator of the non-Magyars, took on an increasingly militaristic role as the commander of the Slavic conscripts.[650] The *Gyula*, conversely, took on an increasingly administrative role in the management of sedentary defence infrastructure in the East, eventually becoming a semi-independent ruler.[651] The *Kende* also took on a more active role, transforming into the *Nagyfejedelem* ("Grand Prince"); an active leadership position organised around the sacral bloodline of the Árpád Dynasty.[652]

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[645] (Engel, 2001, p. 17); "Many scholars assume, therefore, that the position of the kende was more or less identical to that of the Khan."
[646] Per (Engel, 2001, p. 19); "[The confederation agreed on] five basic principles: that the princely honour would always be held by the descendants of Álmos; that all the wealth collectively acquired by the leaders should be distributed among them; that the leaders and their descendants should always have a place in the prince's council and should always participate 'in the honour of the realm'; that those breaking their faith to the [kende] or fomenting strife should be put to death; and, finally, that whoever might seek to break the agreement should be punished by eternal malediction."
[647] (Golden, 1992, p. 102)
[648] (Sugar, et al., 1990, p. 12)
[649] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 23); also known as the "Second Battle of Lechfeld"
[650] (Curta, 2006, p. 189)
[651] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 346)
[652] (Engel, 2001, p. 19)

The decisive end to Hungary's existence as a Steppe polity can be said to be its defeat by the Christian armies of Charlemagne at the Battle of Augsburg in 955.[653] Unable to raid or extract tribute, the social contract of the confederation evaporated. A bloody power struggle developed within the sacral bloodline, and soon expanded across the polity.[654] Throughout its course, the Steppe polity gradually transformed into a sedentary, European-style kingdom; the *Steppe Triarchy* and Tengrism exchanged for Monarchic Primogeniture and Christianity.[655] Some constants remained, however. The new *Comitatus*, or *Ispán,* were drawn from the diverse peoples of the Carpathian Basin, and Hungary thus emerged as a relatively *dynastic* state in comparison to other more "national" European States.[656] In addition, in order to maintain the loyalty of their follows, the *Christianising* kings of Hungary distributed Royal Estate *in absolutum*.[657] Thus "[land] was not given, as would be normal in the case of a fief, for certain services to be rendered in the future, but for services that had already been done and were now to be rewarded".[658]

Within Europe, this was highly irregular, yet it was a remnant of Steppe Tradition. Elsewhere, within the institution of *Feudalism,* land had been awarded on the basis of continued service to the monarch. The Hungarians, having emerged in a Steppe Tradition, held no such tradition of service; the Grand Prince divided land as his ancestors would have divided loot from raids.[659] As Keeneth W. Harl writes, "Within a century, Hungary ceased to be an extension of the Eurasian steppes, and became a land of cities, villages, and ranches, and so the bastion of Latin Christendom against future invaders from the east".[660] In doing so, they sealed off another Steppe Empire, that of the Bulgars and Bulgarians,

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[653] (Engel, 2001, p. 25)
[654] (Molnár, 2001, p. 18)
[655] (Engel, 2001, p. 26)
[656] Per (Molnár, 2001, p. 25), the term "dynastic" is used with reference to the Hungarian State as being a multi-ethnic polity that served the dynasty on the basis of dynastic authority itself, rather than the traditional European sense of a "Territorial Dynasty" seen in contemporary France or England.
[657] Per (Rady, 2000, p. 3); It is often said that the land was not donated to nobles as *Allodial Title*, but such would have still require the payment of taxes. This was not the case here.
[658] (Engel, 2001, p. 93)
[659] (Rady, 2000, p. 3)
[660] (Harl, 2023, p. 205)

which – whilst beyond the scope of this paper – followed a similar transition into a medieval Slavic polity.[661]

Nonetheless, the sacral bloodline also remained, and continued to plague the Kingdom with fratricidal conflicts for the centuries thereafter.[662] The consequence of these two trends was the emergence of perhaps the freest nobility in Europe – the *aurea libertas* of Hungary's 13th Century – unbridled by royal decrees.[663] Unrestrained by feudal obligations, the nobility transformed into a collection of self-interested tyrants interested only in bleeding their own peasantry dry. The Steppe Tradition in Hungary thus did not result in a tyrannical State, but rather a tyrannical nobility.[664] Yet it was the existence of this "Golden Liberty" that ultimately led to Hungarian Nobles being unable to unite in the face of Ottoman onslaught two hundred years later.[665]

This powerful nobility would, in the 19th Century, likewise prevent the exercise of Enlightened Absolutism by the Habsburg Monarchy. Whilst this may seem like a minor detail, it ultimately resulted in a series of flow-on effects that are still observable differences between the west-Slavic subjects of the former Austrian realm and the former Hungarian realm; the Czechs and Slovaks.[666] Thus, the experiences demonstrate that, even in the case of near-complete *Sedentisation*, the Steppe Tradition continues to shape institutional development in unpredictable ways.

If the Steppe Tradition merely involved the reproduction of "administrative quirks" in the case of medieval Hungary, then it can be said to have persisted in full in the Ottoman State well into the 15th Century.[667] Even the Ottomans of the 19th Century remained a *Dynastic*, *Patrimonial* and *Multi-ethnic Empire* – but such could be said about other empires of the day. For this reason, it is worth exploring exactly how the Steppe Tradition shaped the Ottoman State.

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[661] (Harl, 2023, p. 205)
[662] (Róna-Tas, 1996, p. 346)
[663] (Molnár, 2001, p. 32)
[664] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 671)
[665] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 670)
[666] (Vuletic, 2003)
[667] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 30)

Upon the entry of the Turks into Anatolia in 1071, the Turkic tribes had found "living conditions sufficiently close to their traditions to limit the need for adaptation, unlike in the Arab lands or Iran".[668] As such, elements of Steppe Tradition, such as the approach to *Real Property*, were transplanted in full. For instance, the Turks considered private property "an unintelligible or unacceptable concept", with all land understood as being "as for collective use".[669] Likewise, *Feudalism* did not exist, unlike in the Persian and Arab world, where اقطاع (*'iqta* – "fief") was granted. Rather, *Rûmic Beys* were granted *temporary command* over a territory and a small army, both of which could be rescinded at any time.[670] The derogative nature of commanders in the Steppe Tradition meant that *Beys* were seldom considered superior to the troops they commanded – such an honour existed only for the Khan.[671] Consequently, with the collapse of *Rûmic* rule (and its bureaucratic class) following the Battle of Köse Dağ in 1243, the *Beyliks* were cut from their main source of legitimacy.[672]

Thus, the early *Beys* of the Ottomans – Ertugrul, Osman I, and Orhan – continued to appeal to the *Yarliq* of the long-dead Seljuqs, upon whose behalf they acted, until they could assert authority on their own terms.[673] The assertion of such authority by Murad I (1362-1389) went further than a mere change in titles; it coincided with a major administrative overhaul that signalled the transformation of the *Beylik* into a Steppe Polity that was *ipso facto* independent of a larger imperial order.[674] This administrative overhaul was described by Cemal Kafadar as being a "belated arrival" of Seljuq institutions.[675] Yet rather than the adoption of new institutions or their "arrival" by geopolitical accident, the transformation of the Ottoman Beylik into the Ottoman Empire should be seen as a matter of conscious legitimization in the Steppe Tradition.[676] In other words, the Ottomans finally felt they had the authority to act in their capacity as a Steppe Empire, and not merely a *Beylik*.

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[668] (Cahen, 2001, p. 76)
[669] (Cahen, 2001, p. 101)
[670] (Cahen, 2001, p. 149)
[671] (Miller, 2009, p. 69)
[672] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 145)
[673] (Imber, 2002, p. 13)
[674] (Kafadar, 1995, p. 142)
[675] (Kafadar, 1995, p. 141)
[676] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)

In order to achieve this, the Ottoman dynasty had to ground itself in a tradition as legitimate as the *Yarliq* through which they had led. In its creation, *Bey* Murad leant on a combination of secular Turkic Steppe tradition and Islamic legitimacy to sanctify his bloodline – claiming descent from both the Quranic Prophet Noah and *Oghuz Khan*, the Turkic title for Modun of the Xiong-nu.[677] Such a "Golden Lineage" moved Murad beyond being the leader of a mere tribal confederation and into the position of *Khan* – a prestige that was sanctified in an elaborate process in which Murad "took his place at the heart of the heaven-like throne... [whereupon] the commanders of the *left* and *right*, and soldiers as numerous as stars made their act of allegiance and obedience [to the Osmanli Dynasty]".[678] As Islamic as the Ottoman Polity was, its core was firmly *Steppe*.

Having sanctified the Golden Kin of the Osmanli as something beyond *primus inter pares* within the Confederation, *Khan* Murad reintroduced other institutions of Steppe Tradition. Such included the civil-military dualism of all Steppe Empires, as well as the *Comitatus*, which took the form of the infamous Janissary.[679] The *Devşirme* ("collection") by which Christian families provided a child to the slave army of Janissaries was completely at odds with Islamic protections provided for *Dhimmis* ("people of the book") – demonstrating the resilience of Steppe Tradition, even in the face of religious prohibition.[680] Such makes more sense when viewed as a continuation of the *Qulëlik* of the Göktürks.[681]

Nonetheless, it was the maintenance of those very traditions, such as the connections to the "Golden Lineage" of the Xiong-nu, that would allow the Ottomans to rapidly incorporate the remaining *Beyliks* of the post-Seljuq period.[682] As Kafadar concludes "In less than two centuries the Ottomans had transformed themselves, at least in their historical

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[677] (Başar, 1995)
[678] (Imber, 2002, p. 115)
[679] Per (Shaw, 1976, p. 27); Such was done explicitly in order to "counteract the power of nobles by developing Christian vassal soldiers and converted kapıkulu as his personal troops, independent of the regular army"
[680] (Nicolle, 2011, p. 273)
[681] (Golden, 2011, p. 29)
[682] (Imber, 2002, p. 115)

consciousness, from recipients to granters of insignia of vassalage".[683] In describing further the legacy of the *Steppe Tradition* on the early Ottoman State, Karen Barkey writes:

> "The centre was omnipotent; it was protected by a central patrimonial army of loyal slaves and it ruled the periphery through a prebendal corps of regional state officials, who if not similarly loyal were at least securely tied to the state through their social and economic interests".[684]

Barkey further notes the existence of the *Steppe Tradition* in the direct plundering of State lands by "formalized informal elements" ("*Kormlenie*" in the Russian Sense) and the widespread deputisation of society itself:

> "The state used the bandits to consolidate territory and centralize further control… [Rather than challenging the system], Ottoman bandits were instead intent on benefiting from the existing system; they perceived success as incorporation into the Ottoman regional or central administration… State officials demonstrated the merit of this practice; they incorporated legitimate officials as well as illegitimate ones into the system in order to keep them under supervision."[685]

Such institutions, Barkey argues, are different enough from those of "Western Empires" to make comparisons of imperial decline, such as those of Jack Goldstone, moot – "The specific historical events Goldstone presents as markers of state breakdown actually resulted in state-society bargains that consolidated state power". The Ottoman state would not survive industrialisation and its pressures – dissolving into its component parts from which the modern Turkish state would emerge in 1919.[686] When it did so, it emerged not as a Steppe Empire, but as a *Hybridized* Nation State modelled primarily on the Western Tradition of state-building, but with minor layovers from the Steppe tradition.[687] Nonetheless, the Ottomans demonstrate not only the maintenance of Steppe Tradition, but its readoption. They also demonstrate the dynamics of hierarchical relationships and

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[683] (Kafadar, 1995, p. 147)
[684] (Barkey, 1994, p. 44)
[685] (Barkey, 1994, p. 237)
[686] (Baer, 2021, p. 315)
[687] (Hanioğlu, 2017, p. 204)

legitimacy within the Steppe System – the importance of *Legacy* and *Pedigree* in the creation of new patrimonial networks.[688]

The implications of this are significant for Motyls hypothesis. Motyl's view on imperial disintegration was primarily based on Empires in the "European" tradition.[689] For the purposes of this analysis, the Steppe Tradition should be considered as a potential explanation for Russia's historic durability. Whilst the Ottomans could be said to have *Hybridized* and ultimately *Sedentarised* to the greatest extent with the emergence of the Republic of Turkey; the same cannot be said of Russia.[690] Whilst institutions of Steppe Rule have been thoroughly examined in **Part 3.3**, it is nonetheless worth exploring the wider implications of such institutions on "State" development before their application to Russia is charted. For this reason, the next part, **Part 3.5** will examine in depth how Steppe Empires function at a lower level.

Figure 9 – The Arrival of the Hungarians, by Árpád Feszty (1894).

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[688] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)
[689] (Motyl, 1999, p. 127)
[690] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 213)

3.5 Ruling the world from the Stirrup

Having introduced Di Cosmo, Neumann and Wigan's typologies of Steppe Empires, it is necessary to review the commonalities before proceeding. As mentioned previously, the "ideal type" of the Steppe Tradition is observable through the collection of common traits listed in **Table 3**. These traits, however, have wider implication that are alluded to but are not expanded upon by the authors. For that reason, some time should be taken to examine the commonalities of the Steppe Tradition *and* the how such commonalties manifest in the political behaviours of Steppe Empires.

Firstly, as all Steppe Polities form around *Charismatic Authority*, they are necessarily *Revolutionary* and *Revisionary*. "Revolutionary" here refers to the intent to overturn the political status quo in the *proximal space*, that is, the "domestic" in so far as such can exist without a *domos* (the "*Nomestic*"?).[691] The fact that they are "Revolutionary" also means that they are corrosive to preexisting forms of authority – a marked departure from the upwards deference of authority found in the *Traditional Kingships* of Iron-Age Europe.[692] The fact that Steppe Polities are organised through a process of *Crisis, Militarization and Centralization* means that there is far less room to negotiate the rights of the suborned nobility.[693] On the contrary, the former core elite is rapidly displaced by the emergence of a heterogenous incorporated elite organised around an emergent imperial ideology.[694] The traditional elite of the core is balanced by the incorporated elite and the patrimony of the Khagan himself (the *Comitatus*).

"Revisionary" applies this same concept to the status quo in the *distal space*, that is, the system of relations beyond the *Nomestic* – the fundamental principles and hierarchy existing between Steppe polities.[695] Steppe polities is key here, as part of the Steppe Tradition was a religiously codified recognition of the geopolitical space ("sphere of

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[691] "Revolutionary" here is used as a synonym for "Radical" as it is used in Domestic Politics, that is "the intent to transform or replace the fundamental principles of a society or political system, often through social change, structural change, revolution or radical reform". See (Pugh, 2010, p. 127)

[692] (Lomas, 2017, p. 83)

[693] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 211)

[694] (Halperin, 1985, p. 23)

[695] This is the application of International Politics insofar as such can be applied to relations between non-polises. See (Tenembaum, 2012).

influence") that was reserved for the "people of felt tents" to rule.[696] The mandate to rule over the sedentary periphery needed theological justification, and gradually developed during the reign of the Khitans, Uyghurs and Mongols on the steppe.

Modun's aforementioned coup d'etat was followed not merely by a reorganisation of the internal structure of the Xiong-nu Confederation, but the overturning of the status quo on the Steppe.[697] The Göktürks were likewise founded on the basis of a slave revolt against the Rouran Khagan and the pre-existing Mongol-Hunnic dominance of the Steppe.[698] Finally, Genghis Khan, in a revolutionary move, expanded the *Steppe Khagan Mandate[699]* to include the known world.[700] Such charismatic authority is often paired with social revolution, and Genghis "abolished inherited aristocratic titles in their lineages, clans, and tribes… [transferring all offices] to the State".[701] This initial ideological understanding evolved into the *Yasaq* ("levy"), a system with its origins in tribute payment that gradually formed a broader code of conduct within the *Chinggisid* territories.[702] Such gave ideological cohesion to the Mongol realm and established a moral justification for the evolution of the Chinggisid Federation into a trans-continental Mongol Empire.[703]

A second trait shared by Steppe Empires is that they are necessarily *Autocratic*. This may seem contradictory, particularly given the decentralised nature of early Steppe Confederations, the wide and open nature of the steppe, and the apparent (although often exaggerated) "tolerance" of late Steppe Empires.[704] Yet *Decentralised* or *Grassroots Totalitarianism* is certainly not a concept foreign to Social Science generally.[705] At the local level, what is called *Civil Society* can often take the form of an *Ochlocracy*, or "mob

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[696] (Halperin, 1985, p. 23)
[697] (Miller, 2009, p. 93)
[698] (Yavuz, 2022, p. 12)
[699] This term is used to describe the general recognised space fought over by Steppe Empires across millenia – namely, the Eurasian Steppe.
[700] (Halperin, 1985, p. 23)
[701] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 94)
[702] (Favereau, 2021, p. 313)
[703] (Rachewiltz, 1973, p. 22)
[704] Per (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 260); "The idea that Mongol rulers were indifferent to the religious practices of their subjects has been remarkably longlived… even if the Mongols did not persecute their subjects on the grounds of religion per se, they cared only too much about some practices."
[705] See, for instance (Le Bon, 1896).

rule".[706] A good example of this in practice are the actions of the Red Guards in the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976); a seemingly decentralised civil society organisation that nonetheless implemented decrees of the central leadership in a haphazard and "non-bureaucratic" way.[707] Law was likewise enforced on the Steppe.

Under Mongol Rule, the image of the Khan was venerated, "offensive" religious practices were curtailed, forced marriages under the levirate tradition were imposed, and local cadres were quick to take action against entire kinship lines or villages in the case of violations.[708] In describing a similar system of "decentralised totalitarian governance" in the Xiong-nu Empire, specialist Bryan K. Miller quotes a scene from *Star Wars* wherein the officials of a vast Galactic Empire react to the Emperor having dissolved the senate:

> "How will the emperor maintain control without the bureaucracy?"
> "The regional governors now have direct control over their [own] territories….
> *Fear* will keep [the provinces] in line."[709]

The Mongols and their predecessors may not have had an intergalactic superweapon, but they nonetheless ruled through a carefully cultivated "programme of terror and cruelty" that was "so stupefying that [an official] could begin killing people [unjustly, and] no one dared to raise a hand to stop him".[710] For the nobility and bureaucracy, in so far as such existed, executions were much more symbolic – such had to send a message.[711] Such is the perverse paradox of Steppe Empires. The wide expanse of the Steppe means that the *Nomas* can only exist by *deputising* the entire society in service of its ends.[712] As the continued existence of society depends on the functioning of the empire, every citizen –

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[706] (Hasanović, 2018, p. 57)
[707] (Macfarquar & Schoenhals, 2006, p. 104); "it was at the elite middle school attached to Tsinghua University that the Red Guard movement was born as early as May 29, when students there took it upon themselves to organize in order to defend the Chairman and his Thought, and to struggle against revisionism… . At the end of almost every poster, the name "Red Guard" was signed in different ways."
[708] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 260)
[709] Commander Tarkhan in Star Wars Episode IV, quoted by (Miller, 2024, p. 12)
[710] (Giessauf, 2007, p. 94)
[711] (Hope, 2016, p. 556)
[712] (Barkey, 1994, p. 237)

already a soldier – is further made a spy.[713] Thus, the political dissident on the fringes of the Steppe Empire, knowing that any protest will bring a visit from the hyper-mobile and hyper-violent commissariat, will not stray far from the party line.

This lack of *static territoriality* has other implications too. Firstly, the polity does not organise around a central nerve centre that can be destroyed, such as a capital city – it remains *mobile* across the Steppe, and thus can survive repeated incursions by invading forces. Historians like to stress the fact that the German Army almost captured Moscow in 1941 as if to imply that such would have ended the war in a Russian defeat.[714] Yet Russia has historically proved itself more than willing to retreat into the Steppe when faced with invasions from the periphery.[715] If Russia is believed to be operating according to the Steppe Tradition, as this paper will argue, then the Nazis occupying Moscow would have proved no more impactful to the cohesion of the Russian state than the sack of Karakorum at the hands of the Ming Dynasty, or the destruction of the Khazar Atil at the hands of the Rus' – or indeed the French occupation of Moscow, for that matter.[716]

Steppe Empires are not tied to territory, and therefore cannot be defeated territorially. Their collapse only comes in the choking of the *Steppe Cycle* that sustain them. Thus, Steppe Empires, lacking territorial or material attachments, inevitably became more invested in the control of people rather than land.[717] Nomadic groups thus do not demarcate land – such is believed to be held in the commons or the property of the Universal Khagan. Land ownership, insofar as such exists on the steppe, "is not fixed, and movable property assumes a specific importance in it".[718] Land is thus not the object of possession, rather it is viewed by historic Steppe governors as merely the tool by which to sustain their real wealth – the people.[719]

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[713] See (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 697) on how the Russian society cooperated to enforce Serfdom.
[714] (Shirer, 1990, p. 275)
[715] See for example Bolshevik retreat from Siberia westwards in the wake of Japanese "intervention" during the Civil War, at (Dallin, 1971, p. 158)
[716] (Zamoyski, 2012, p. 12)
[717] (Kim, 2019, p. 294); "conscripted soldiers were given to Hülegü as īnjū (private property) by Möngke Khan".
[718] (Tokei, 1982, p. 536)
[719] (Sneath, 2001, p. 43)

A similar development can be observed in the *Mandala System* of Southeast Asia – a concentric system of state power defined by Historian Oliver William Walters as being "a patchwork of often overlapping mandalas [of power]" that extend from a powerful core in concentric layers.[720] This system differed from the European conception of power, which was formed by a *Polis* defining its territories from outside-in through the demarcation of national borders. As put by Richard A. Ruth with regard to the *Mandala System*;

> "In the land-rich and manpower-poor realms of the region, it was neither important nor desirable to demarcate national borders… [rather] conquering armies prized people who could do skilled and unskilled work [across their realm]… [seeking instead] skilled labour from scribes, artisans, and musicians who could enhance the lustre of their courts".[721]

Unfortunately, a comparison between the *Steppe Tradition* and the *Mandala System* is beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the underlying cause of this form of state formation– a surplus of available land a population deficit. This differs remarkably from Europe, wherein the limited arable land and dense population meant that private property became, in the Lockean Sense, the right from which all other rights were derived.[722] No such system existed in the mountainous and sparsely populated *Zomia* of Southeast Asia, nor on the great expanse of the Eurasian Steppe. Thus, *whereas the Feudal Regimes of Europe owned land, to which people were attached; the Steppe Dynasties owned people, to which land was attached.*

The result is that all Steppe polities lack a stable *Territorial Tradition* – an "Ethnoscape" in the words of Anthony D. Smith.[723] In *Sedentary Polities*, it is common for communities to identity with the landscape – appropriating topographical features into the collective memory and identity of the community itself.[724] In such cases, the land takes on an "emotive dimension" as it becomes associated with the "heroic ancestors" and "great

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[720] (Wolters, 2018, p. 27)
[721] (Ruth, 2021, p. 47)
[722] (Landes, 2015, p. 110)
[723] (Smith, 1997, p. 36)
[724] (Yates, 2004, p. 100)

deeds" of the community across time.[725] Whilst often associated with "indigenous communities",[726] the emergence of an *ethnoscape* can just as easily occur amongst settler populations over time.[727] For *Steppe Polities*, however, the formation of a heterogenous community around a mobile *Nomas* rather than a sedentary *Polis* prevents the same degree of identification with the land.[728]

As value existed within the people, Steppe Empires were economically *coercive* and *expansive* rather than *innovative* and *enhancive*.[729] Beginning as *Tribute Empires*, such coercion continued even as the Steppe Empires conquered agricultural lands and shifted into *Dual-Administration Empires*. Steppe Empires would always face a disadvantage in manpower compared to the agricultural states on the periphery. Ergo, any agricultural territory controlled in *Dual-Administration Empire* had to be mobilised to the greatest extent, lest it risked becoming the prey of sedentary recapture or steppe raiding by other polities.[730]

Such autocracy was primarily *Patrimonial-Dynastic* or *Collegial-Doctrinal* in nature, and in all cases are *cosmopolitan*. As seen in the case of the Xiong-nu, the archetypical Steppe Empire begins as a group of tribes uniting under a charismatic leader in order to extract tribute from the periphery.[731] In the words of Turkologist Peter B. Golden, "Nomadic Peoples do not necessarily organise their states along ethnic lines; rather, the binding factors are the nomadic economy and the institutions it creates, and politico-military leadership [in] a charismatic clan".[732] Thus, upon emergence, the majority of Steppe Empires are largely *Patrimonial*, that is, a system wherein "the political domination of a ruler with a highly personal and strictly sub-ordinated (dependent) administrative staff".[733]

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[725] (Cauthen, 2007, p. 301)
[726] See (Mcintosh, 2010): Note that there is no accepted definition of what an indigenous person is. Nonetheless this paper takes the UN Definition of "those who descend from populations which inhabited the country prior to the establishment of present state boundaries".
[727] (Dominy, 1995, p. 385)
[728] (Miller, 2024, p. 20)
[729] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 209)
[730] (Kollman, 2017, p. 137)
[731] (Miller, 2024, p. 200)
[732] (Golden, 1982, p. 62)
[733] (Murvar, 1971, p. 504), summarising (Weber, 1968)

The nature of the sacral leadership and the inability to maintain hold of wealth on the Steppe means that all wealth flows to the Khagan and is immediately and continuously distributed down the hierarchy of loyalty.[734] As such, within Steppe Polities, increases in wealth closely coincide with increases in population, as wealth is redistributed throughout the polity and more beneficiaries are brought into the *Horde*. Such expenditures have a cyclic nature; the conquest of new populations or "unintegrated" territories on the periphery increases the demands on the *cascadal* system.[735] The fact that all Steppe polities developed in a "capital poor environment" means that expansion is the only means to the end of securing loyalty through payment.[736] I refer to this as the *Steppe Cycle*, and it is demonstrated in ***Figure 8***.
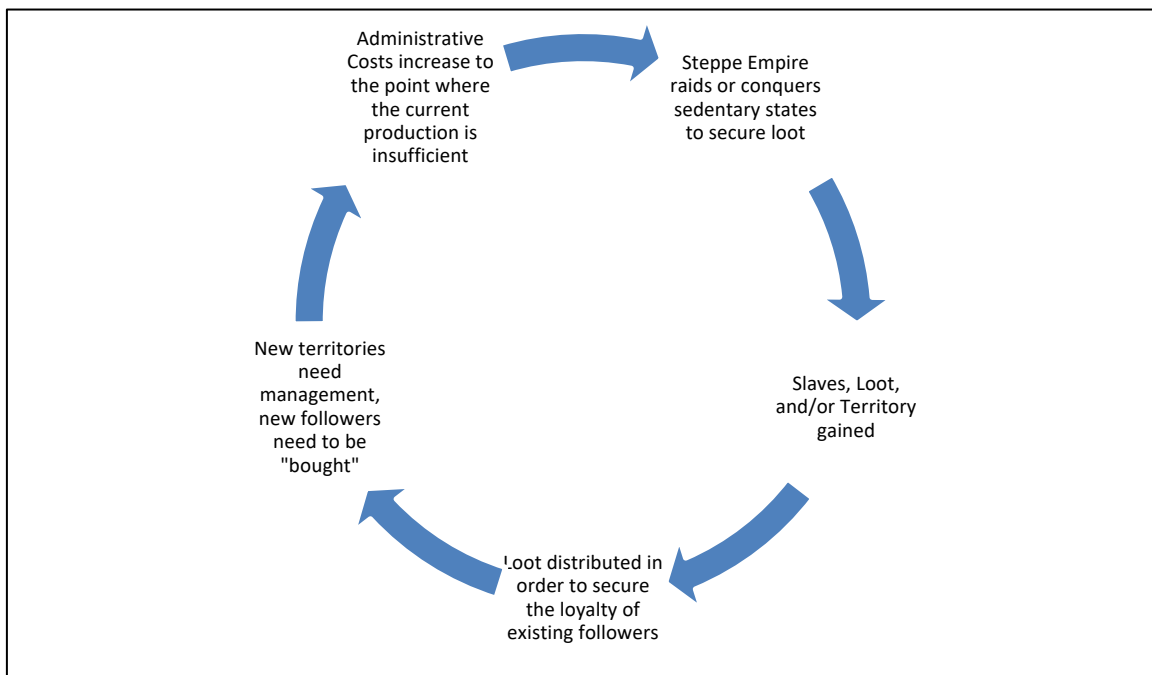

Figure 10 – the Steppe Cycle, the end of which is the inability of the Khagan to secure the loyalty of his followers through Loot. (Neumann & Wigen, 2018)

Returning to the concept of *Crisis, Militarisation and Centralisation* – all Steppe Empires form around a *Comitatus*, or "sworn brotherhood". The fact that the brotherhood is "sworn" rather than "blood" is key – as by forsaking one's own lineage in service of the

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[734] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 27)
[735] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 23)
[736] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 22)

Khagan, one is placed in a relationship of dependency.[737] The *Comitatus*, as an appanage of the Khagan, retains the authority of the Khagan and thus emerges as a class above the traditional power relationships on the Steppe.[738] Within a small tribal band, the Khagan is able to administer all matters of tribal life – relying upon the *Comitatus* to merely to provide security and carry out his direct orders. The expansion of the polity makes such a system of direct rule by the Khagan increasingly cumbersome.[739] The solution for the Khagan, then, is to increasingly delegate responsibilities to other members of his household – which, by Steppe Tradition, includes the sworn brotherhood of his *Comitatus*.[740]

Ab initio, the *Comitatus* may be drawn from the same Kinship or Ethnic Group as the Khagan. With the passage of time, however, the ranks of the *Comitatus* and the subsidiary bureaucracy are increasingly filled with the various subjects of the Empire.[741] Thus, what began as a personal bodyguard of 150 loyal followers of Genghis Khan rapidly expanded into a vast governing multi-ethnic apparatus of 10,000 state bureaucrats entirely dependent on their Patron.[742] As the *cosmopolitanism* of the elite is a consequence of its foundation around a loyalty to the Patron, such *cosmopolitanism* often fades in due course as the dynasty *Hybridizes* and becomes "national". Within the *Hybridizing* Mongol Yuan Dynasty, the *Keshig* (*Comitatus*) had, by 1330, become entirely *bureaucratized* and *hybridized* – no longer serving any military role and almost entirely composed of Han Chinese.[743] That said, a common culture often emerges even in absence of *Hybriziation*. For instance, the later steppe empires became almost entirely ethno-linguistically *Turkic*, even while their genetic character remained quite diverse.[744] Such is a necessity for conducting higher-level politics on the heterogenous Steppe.

There is another transformation at play here, however, and that is the emergence of a *Collegial-Doctrinal* tradition. The nature of the patrimonial system means that the

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[737] (Burbank, 2021, p. 95)
[738] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 173)
[739] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 36)
[740] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 174)
[741] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 23)
[742] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 18)
[743] (Peers, 2006, p. 164)
[744] (Becker, 2023)

bureaucratic elite are "obliged to adopt a more collegial interpretation of authority [if they wish to keep power]" upon the death of their patron.[745] Such ultimately results in a transformation of the *Charismatic* and *Traditional* authority of the Khagan and his Dynasty into a form of *Rational-Legal* authority embodied in the governing bureaucracy and its system of laws.[746]

Thus, *Patrimonialism* is, in due time, transformed into the *Collegialism* of a bureaucratic class who "[qualify] imperial authority in terms of [laws], custom and precedent… their expertise in [which] qualified them to have a share in the wealth and government of the Empire".[747] In the case of the Mongol Empire, the *collegial* forces, mostly composed of the previous patrimonial elite, slowly reduced the *Chingghisid heirs* to puppet rulers in each of their respective domains.[748] Such bound the Chingghisids to the inherited traditions and laws of their predecessors, until they could be surpassed altogether by the new *hybridized* elite.[749] Such was the case in the Ilkhanate, wherein the Chingghisids gradually lost power to a lower-bureaucratic elite and the *Comitatus*. By the time of Tamerlane, it was no longer necessary to be of the "Golden Kin" in order to command respect – with the Timurids instead drawing on a mixture of Islamic justifications for their rule, de-emphasising the Chingghisid requirment.[750] Whilst Tamerlane eventually married into the Chingghisid line and sought hegemony on the Steppe, he nonetheless distinguished himself from the Chingghisids by emphasising his own charismatic authority – going so far as to consult astrologers and imams in procuring the *fortune of heaven*.[751]

The existence of the geopolitical "room to manoeuvre" at an elite level means that differences often emerge upon the breakdown of Steppe Polities vis-à-vis Sedentary polities. In the Sedentary Tradition the collapse of central authority typically results in the deferral of existing political institutions to static regional administrations, which, in turn, emerge as new polities – usually organised around a defined territory with an ethnic or

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[745] (Hope, 2016, p. 4)
[746] (Weber, 1968, p. 88)
[747] (Hope, 2016, p. 3)
[748] (Favereau, 2021, p. 31)
[749] (Hope, 2016, p. 204)
[750] (Subtelny, 2007, p. 110)
[751] (Harl, 2023, p. 395)

regional character.[752] In the Steppe Tradition, however, power extends only from the *Khagan* (or the *Collegium*) and is legitimised only through the *Yarliq* ("patent to rule") and the *Yasaq* ("levy").[753] When the source of such legitimacy is removed, the institutions that grew from it nonetheless remain as "ghosts" of the previous system.

Politics thus moves into the realm of ambiguity, and power reorganises around charismatic leaders who draw upon the previous authority until a new source of authority can be established.[754] Notably, in contrast to the breakdown of Sedentary Empires, the breakdown of Steppe Empires does not result in the formation of polities defined by territorial space, but rather, the formation of competing groups within the same space – lacking the territoriality and geographically defined limits of power visible in sedentary polities.[755] When that authority is finally established, new Steppe polities emerge bearing "politiconyms" rather than "ethnonyms" or "geonyms"; thus, one has the Ottoman Empire and the Shaybanid Khaganate of Öz Beg rather than the Sultanate of Turkey and the Emirate of Transoxiana.[756] Such polities, as children of the former order, compete for its restoration under their own banner. It was this competition that allowed the *Pax Mongolica* to exist for a century after the Empire had collapsed. Thus, the breakdown of central authority in a Steppe Polity is vastly different from the process described by Zartman in **Part 2.2**.

That said, this is not the case wherein Steppe regimes inherit a territorial tradition (directly or indirectly), and complete fully or partially the process of *Sedentarization*. This was the case in the post-Steppe polities of Hungary and Turkey, but also in the case of Russia, which began as a Sedentary civilisation and partially *Nomaditized*. The exact means by which this occurred, as well as its implications for the Steppe Tradition as a whole, are the focus of the **Chapter 4**. Whilst the *Steppe Tradition* is a wide concept, the key factors that I have considered relevant for the purpose of this thesis are:

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[752] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 55)
[753] (Khodarkovsky, 2002, p. 61)
[754] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 112)
[755] (Zartman, 1995, p. 65)
[756] Drawing their names from Osman and Öz Beg. See (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 146).

- ***Patrimonialism***: Rule of a closed elite by a "Patron", who maintains control over the society through personal, rather than official, linkages. Elite positions are secured through loyalty to the Patron.

- ***Paternalism***: Rule by a closed elite over a "politically neutralised" population, wherein autonomous wealth generation and political sovereignty is limited, and the population remains reliant on the Patron.

- ***Parasitism***: Rule by elites often resembles a parasitic relationship at a local level, with incorporated elites and created elites alike extracting tribute directly from the populations they rule over.

- ***Pluralism***: Rule over a an ethnically or religiously pluralistic society, wherein identification with the ruling dynasty or party supersedes identification with national or religious bodies.

- ***Policeism***:[757] Rule through an extensive system of policing, wherein all citizens of the empire are informally deputised and form part of the wider state apparatus. All citizens are likewise expected to serve both a military and civic role.

- ***Patronage***: Rule through a system of "trickle down" patronage, wherein wealth is directed to the Ruler for redistribution across the Empire. Political unity is contingent on such incentives remaining in place.

- ***Primacy***: Rule with disregard to international norms or standards, the view of one's own realm as being the primary polity and not subject to a wider international or "legal-moral order" such as "Christendom" or "Confucian State Relations".

Such traditions are the natural result of "state formation" on the Steppe. It should be noted, however, that whilst such traits are common to all Steppe regimes, they are not exclusive

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[757] Per (Reynolds, 1845, p. 185); "These men could talk of nothing but themselves or their pursuits: they appeared to live in a world of *policeism*; all their ideas were circumscribed to stationhouses, magistrates' offices, prisons, and criminal courts of justice."

to Steppe regimes. The following chapter demonstrates two *Hybrid Regimes* that developed beyond the Eurasian Steppe. What the regimes studied share in common, however, is a large surplus of land compared to people. Notably, both regimes developed similar social technologies in absence of any possible influence from the Eurasian Steppe itself.

3.6 The Steppe Tradition beyond the Steppe

Having charted the broad differences between State development in sedentary civilisations and the emergence of Steppe polities on the Eurasian steppe, it is necessary to further outline the *geopolitical* rather than *cultural* origins of such systems of government. In other words, if it can be shown that such governing styles are *endogenous* rather than *exogenous*, then *State-building* on the Steppe can be considered a unique, and not merely an offshoot of Chinese or Persian traditions.[758]

The Zulu Empire offers one such example of *Steppe Tradition* occurring in isolation of an alternative autocratic tradition. Having its origins in the loose Nguni Mthethwa tribal confederation, the Zulu Empire began to take shape in the early 19th Century under the command of Shaka "Zulu" kaSenzangakhona.[759] Prior to the time of Shaka Zulu, the logic of Herbst and Fukuyama holds, with the immense space and low population density allowing for the constant fragmentation of social groupings as a method of dealing with internal tensions.[760] At the turn of the 18th Century, however, climactic changes and the arrival of new crops via new trans-African and extra-African trade routes led to a population surplus on the cape.[761] At the time, the social organisation of the Nguni people (of which the Zulu form a part) was primarily familial and traditional – organised around settled agrarian kinship groups.[762]

The demand for ivory in exchange for newly available trade goods, however, motivated the Nguni Chieftains to mobilise available manpower at an ever greater rate so as to be used for hunting or raiding.[763] To this end, neighbouring tribal confederations and Shona migrants from the Zimbabwean plateau were subsumed into *royal* civil-military regiments known as *amaButho*.[764] Critically, the *amaButho* were *royal* in the sense that they served the Chief directly, rather than working within the hierarchy of family groups within the larger tribal structure.[765] The system therefore on one hand created opportunities for social

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[758] (Donner, 1986, p. 283)
[759] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 3)
[760] (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 11)
[761] (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 12); "chiefly corn".
[762] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 4)
[763] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 6)
[764] (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 86)
[765] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 7)

advancement irrespective of one's social status, and on the other, created a geographically unbound bureaucratic and military class that was dependent on and loyal to its benefactor in the Chieftain.[766] Here, similarities to the *Qutlug* of the Xiong-nu are apparent, as the *amaButho* "served as an instrument both of internal control and of external defense".[767] Thus, Zulu society by the mid-18th Century, like the Steppe societies of Eurasia, was patrimonial, collectivist and increasingly bureaucratic.

Something more was required to transform Zulu Society into the bureaucratic-military state it is known as today. In line with Nicola Di Cosmo's theory *Crisis, Militarisation and Centralisation*, the *amaButho* gained critical importance when a significant drop in rainfall led to increased competition on the Cape.[768] Facing an increasing inability to grow grain or graze cattle in one place, the Zulu *partially nomaditized*, exchanging their settled agrarian lifestyle for *transhumance* and nomadic raiding – usually in pursuit of livestock.[769]

Not only did such a transition provide for the expansion of the polity, but also its transformation of Zulu society from one based on kinship groups formed around *imiZi* ("homesteads") to one based on *amaKhanda* ("barracks"). Beyond a mere semantic shift, this transition paints a broader picture of the expected *Militarization* of society, per the Steppe Tradition. As the fledgeling Zulu polity expanded across the Cape under the command of Shaka Zulu, the inflow of wealth and conscripts further *Centralised* the War Chief's supremacy over the traditional aristocracy.[770]

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[766] (Vries, 2004, p. x)
[767] (Vries, 2004, p. 46)
[768] (Leśniewski, 2021, p. 87)
[769] (Curnow, 2021, p. 72)
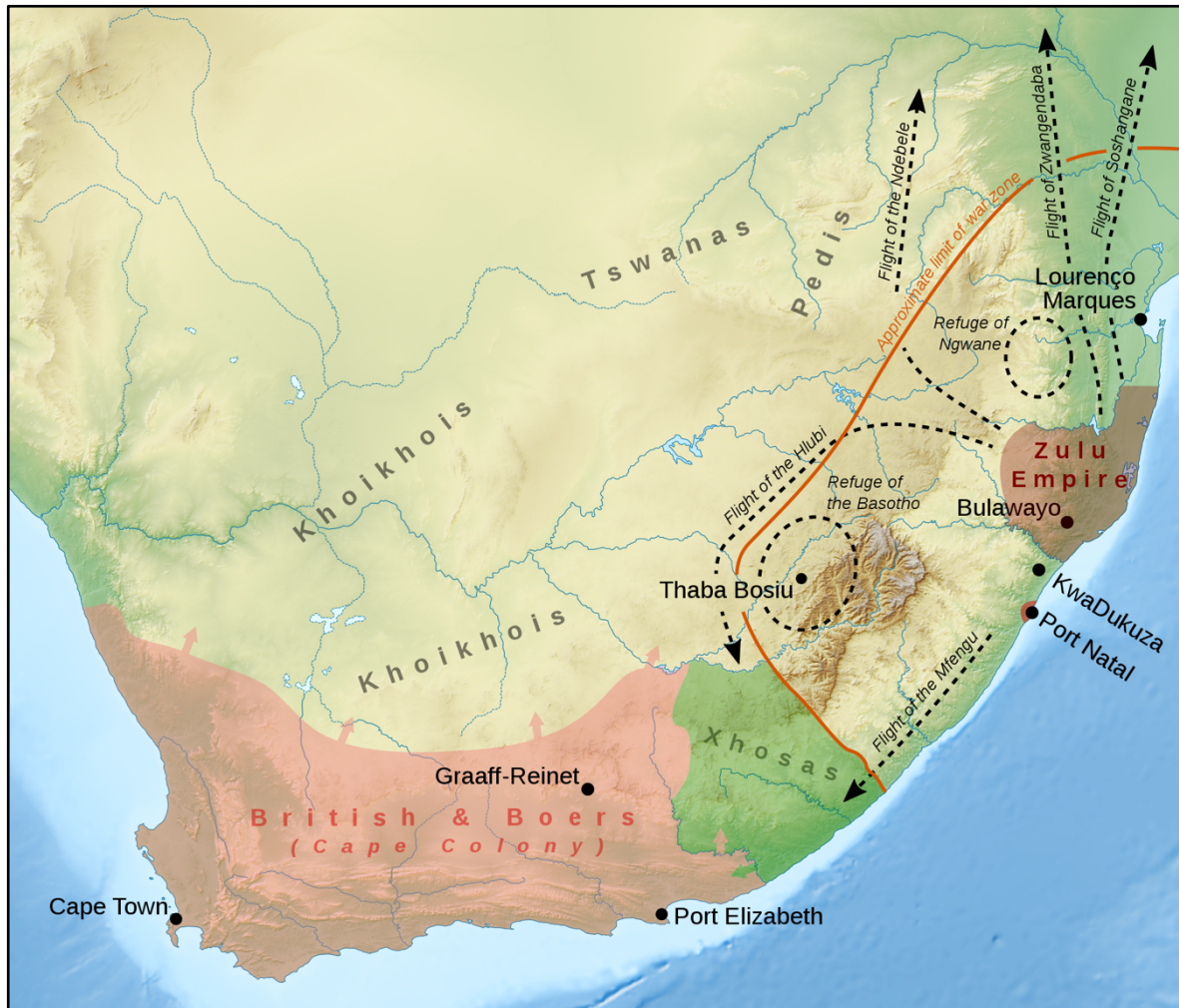[770] (Vries, 2004, p. 38)

Figure 11 – the consolidation and expansion of the Zulu Empire between the 1816 and 1828. Per (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 6).

On the frontier, conquered clans were exterminated or enslaved and dispersed across the empire.[771] Such innovations as standardization and mobilisation gave the Zulu an edge over their competitors, and over 2 million South Africans would meet such violent fates as the Zulu Kingdom expanded across the Cape in a campaign known as the *Mfecane* ("The Crushing") in the 1810s.[772] On the home front, daily life was no less violent; the formalisation and propagandising of a state ideology was complimented by routine public executions of entire kinship lines for offences against it.[773]

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[771] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 8)
[772] (Wright & Cobbing, 1988)
[773] (Vries, 2004, p. 40)

Such penalties were also in place for attempts to migrate out the Kingdom – forever ending the option of migration as a means of conflict resolution.[774] As macabre as such methods were, they ingrained in the Zulu a series of institutions and a sense of identity that survives to the present. The Zulu Empire, having begun its existence as a *Sedentary Polity*, seemingly transformed into an Empire of the Steppe Tradition. Yet like all *Steppe polities* the arrest of such expansion at the hands of Boer *Voortrekkers* led to the collapse of the internal *cascade* and the ultimate disintegration of the Empire.[775]

Within the Arabian Peninsula of the sixth and seventh centuries, similar conditions emerged.[776] Therein, a status quo persisted wherein the centre remained dominated by nomadic pastoralists, whereas the periphery was dotted by city-states and other polities.[777] Other than the Southern Arabian kingdoms, which had stable agricultural bases and coherent political philosophies, the Jewish city-states and Bedouin client-"kingdoms" of the Arabian Peninsula existed solely as an outgrowth of trans-Arabian trade networks.[778] Thus the Ghassanids, Lakhmids, and the Kindarites ("Kingdom" of Kinda) can be viewed in the same sense as the later Xiong-nu – they were frontier guards for the sedentary empires of the Romans, the Persian Sassanids and the Yemeni Himyarites.[779]

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[774] (Vries, 2004, p. 117)
[775] (Knight & McBride, 1995, p. 5)
[776] (Donner, 1986, p. 283)
[777] (Grunebaum, 1963, p. 6)
[778] (Wolf, 1951, p. 332)
[779]

Figure 12 – Pre-Islamic Arabic, 500CE per (Grunebaum, 1963).

Living within a buffer zone between the Sassanid and Himyarite Kingdoms, the Bedouin confederations of Central Arabia became increasingly *militarised* as a result of the *Crisis* caused by Sassanid conquest of Eastern Arabia.[780] The consolidation of Kindarite power under the revolutionary, Hujr Akil al-Murar, thus resembles, in both process and outcome, other polities of the *Steppe Tradition*. According to Di Cosmo's taxonomy, the Kindarites were a *Trade-Tribute Empire*, complete with a patrimonial system of top-down redistribution and a *Comitatus* of "armed Praetorian guards consisting of detribalized elements".[781] Like other *Trade-Tribute Empires*, the Kindarites were unable to maintain cohesion upon the collapse of such tribute networks.[782]

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[780] (Hoyland, 2001, p. 28)
[781] (Wolf, 1951, p. 342)
[782] (Grunebaum, 1963)

The disintegrated of the Kindarites was ultimately caused by the conquest of their primary host, the Himyarite Kingdom of Yemen, by the Sassanids.[783] Yet such geopolitical changes also prompted the *nomaditization* of a significant portion of Yemen's population, who moved north into the declining Kindarite lands.[784] Another outcome of disintegration of the Kindarites was the reluctant independence of their former trade nodes. Whilst it may be tempting to view such cities as commanding the countryside around them, they really existed as "islands set in a sea of nomad tribes".[785] One such node was the city of Mecca, which lay "between pastoral and settled [coastal] areas [of the Arabian Peninsula]".[786] By the mid seventh century, a general economic decline and the arrival of new kinship groups had made the environment in Mecca fractious.[787] As such, when the Prophet Muhammad[788] began proselytising in 613CE, he did so with a clear ideological mandate – "God has put an end to the pride in noble ancestry, you are all descended from Adam, and Adam from dust; the noblest among you is the man who is most pious".[789]

Whilst the Prophet himself emerged out of the sedentary Quraysh tribe of Medina, the settled Arab tribes were *Hybridized* in that they still maintained many of the Bedouin traditions of their ancestors.[790] Such traditions were reinforced through the tradition of *Bedouin Wetnursing*, whereby urban Arabs would send their children into the desert "to be suckled and weaned [by] one of the Bedouin tribes".[791] For Muhammad, the customary six years spent in the desert was compounded by a lifetime spent as a travelling merchant and shepherd prior to prophethood.[792] Such a lifetime amongst the Bedouins gave the Prophet of Islam a wide palette of social technologies to draw on in his unification of the sedentary and the nomadic.

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[783] Per (Grunebaum, 1963, p. 6); The Kinda "kingdom" fell because with the elimination of the Yemen as an independent political agent it ceased to fill a locally accepted function.
[784] (Khazanov, 1993, p. 462)
[785] (Lammens, 1926, p. 114)
[786] (Wolf, 1951, p. 343)
[787] (Watt, 1972, p. 181)
[788] صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
[789] Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), the Noble Quran (Quran.com, 2012).
[790] (Grunebaum, 1963, p. 11)
[791] (Lings, 1987, p. 23)
[792] (Farabi, 2017)

Such manifested in the early Constitution of the Islamic State, the *Constitution of Medina*, which saw the "the transfer of [such] mechanism[s] from the level of the [Bedouin] kin group to the level of the state".[793] The خُمْس (*Khums* – "fifth"), the wealth bestowed to the chieftain for the settlement disputes and feeding of the poor, was maintained and directed to the بَيْتُ الْمَالِ (*Bayt Al-Mal* – "House of Wealth"), a State-run form of early social welfare.[794] The *commons*, or areas that had been delegated as such by the various Bedouin tribes, were made state property, to be held by the Muslims in common.[795] The existing system of tribute between the Jewish city-states of Arabia and their Bedouin clientele likewise has its analogy in the جِزْيَة (*Jizyah* – "tribute").[796]

The أَهْل ٱلْبَيْت (*Ahl Al-Bayt* – "People of the House") emerged as a *Golden Kin* – intended to be followed, or at the very least revered, by all Muslims.[797] The fact that the Shi'a maintained the *Imamate* – the submission to the Ahl Al-Bayt – does not discount the continuation of such mechanisms within Sunnism.[798] For Sunnis, the rejection of the Ahl Al-Bayt merely transformed the empire from one led by the *Golden Kin* to one led by the core clan – the Quraysh itself.[799] Finally, as with all nomadic or semi-nomadic societies, the *Constitution of Medina* dealt harshly with apostates.[800] In such cases "the hands of pious believers shall be raised against every such person as rises in rebellion… or attempts *to spread mischief* among the believers", wherein *mischief* is defined as "break[ing] the covenant of Allah after ratifying it, and sever[ing] that which Allah ordered to be joined".[801] Such can be compared with similar systems of enforcement in the Cossack Hetmanate in Part 4.9b.

The entrenchment of *patrimonial* power – particularly through the granting of privileges to those underprivileged by the existing clan system – created a class of followers that would

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[793] (Wolf, 1951, p. 348)
[794] (Afifa, 2020, p. 180)
[795] (Wolf, 1951, p. 348)
[796] (Lammens, 1926, p. 115)
[797] (Marvani, 2013, p. 13)
[798] (Madelung, 1997, p. 31)
[799] (Donner, 1986, p. 77)
[800] (Wolf, 1951, p. 348)
[801] Surah Al-Baqarah (2:27), the Noble Quran (Quran.com, 2012)

fight to maintain the existence of the polity and the benefits they received from it.[802] As Christine Wolf notes, "When the death of Mohammed threatened the young state with disintegration, [such] minorities acted to keep the tribal groups within the new state".[803] The state that they fought to protect had, by the death of Muhammad, transformed into a polity wherein "the Muslim army contingents… comprised a nomad majority, [but] the cadres we recruited among the settled populations".[804] Both forces – the *legal-rational and sedentary Ansar* and the *traditional and nomadic Mujahirun* would play a decisive role in the handling of succession to the Prophet.[805] In the immediate aftermath of Muhammad's death, the *Ansar* won out, but the Caliphs of the new state "understood quite well that religious persuasion and bright prospects in the afterworld were not enough to guarantee Bedouin loyalty".[806] The Caliphate may have begun as a *sedentary polity* with a strong religious tradition, but as it *Hybridized* it came to adopt the economics of the *Steppe Cycle*.

Like the Mongol bureaucracy several centuries later, the Ansar gradually came to fear for the permeance of their power, which had been grounded only in their connection to the patron. As such, they moved to "[close] the gates of ijtihad",[807] transforming their *Collegial* norms into a *Doctrinal* form grounded in the *Shariah* and the *Fiqh*.[808] At the same time, the pre-Islamic Bedouin elite began to re-consolidate around the Umayyad Clan, forming a new *Patrimonial* base.[809] A third force, the Shi'a, drew on the *Traditional* authority of the *Golden Kin*.[810] The Umayyads won out in the short term, transforming the *Trade-Tribute Empire* of the Rashidun into a *Dual-Administration Empire* wherein "[the] only demand was that communities [beyond Arabia] surrendered quickly and submitted to government by a Muslim ruling elite".[811] This elite, which remained predominantly

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[802] (Afifa, 2020, p. 182)
[803] (Wolf, 1951, p. 351)
[804] (Marçias, 1928, p. 88)
[805] See (Weber, 1919) for the distinction between traditional and legal-rational authority.
[806] (Khazanov, 1993, p. 474)
[807] (Watt, 1972, p. 73)
[808] (Crone & Hinds, 2003, p. 100)
[809] (Hawting, 2002, p. 34)
[810] (Nasr, 2007, p. 31)
[811] (Jones, 2021, p. 204)

Bedouin, sustained itself by plundering both the periphery, as well as the subjects of the Empire directly.[812]

This latter system of plundering became increasingly onerous on the subjects of the Empire as the Umayyads ran out of land to raid or expand into. In the face of a collapsing *Steppe Cycle*, the Umayyads sought to do away with the system of tribute extraction altogether, and emerge as a Dynasty in the *sedentary tradition*.[813] Under the rule of Caliph Abd Al-Malik (685-705), efforts were made to extend the language and culture of the Bedouins into the lives of their urban subjects.[814] Yet attempts to *Arabize* the Empire quickly exposed the economic contradictions in the maintenance of a distinct *Patrimonial* elite in the Umayyad clan.[815] The end result was the Abbasid Revolution of 747, which saw the *Doctrinal Elite* triumph over the *Patrimonial* Umayyad clan, instituting a government that was markedly more pluralistic and urban in character.[816] Having done away with the former Bedouin elite, the Abbasids continued Ummayad trends towards sedentarization and centralisation, creating a professional and salaried infantry and a permanent capital in Baghdad.[817] The Caliphs thus exchanged the remnants of Bedouin state-building for the institutions of their conquered subjects. In doing so, however, they fell victim to the very centrifugal forces that had weakened those empires in the first place.

The Zulu Empire and the Islamic Caliphates, in defiance of traditional theories of State Formation as posited by Francis Fukuyama and Jeffrey Herbst, were states formed in absence of the geographic conditions traditionally required for state formation. Despite lacking the population density for state-building, both *sedentary* polities *nomaditized* in the face of a *Crisis*, and adopted the social technologies of neighbouring nomadic polities. The consequent *hybridized polities* of the Zulu and Islamic Empires exhibited similarities economics and government to those more "pure" polities in the *Steppe Tradition*. Having

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[812] Per (Kennedy, 2001, p. 67); "In Nessana the villagers were ordered to pay specified amounts of produce directly to the leaders of local bedouin clans. Although the governor had ordered the payments, the produce was not sent to a government granary nor did the governor supervise its distribution."
[813] (Hawting, 2002, p. 1)
[814] (Jones, 2021, p. 206)
[815] (Crone & Hinds, 2003, p. 70)
[816] (El-Hibri, 2021, p. 69)
[817] (Kennedy, 2001, p. 114)

embraced the Steppe Cycle of patrimonial politics, both polities were short lived. In the case of the Zulu, the empire collapsed into smaller sedentary units following an arrest of its ability to expand. In the case of the Islamic Empire(s), the polity was unable to adopt sedentary practices whilst keeping the strengths of its origin. In the following chapter, the *Hybridization* of a sedentary Russian polity will be demonstrated in similar terms.

4. The Geopolitical Origins, Rise and Decline of Russian Imperium

On the night of the 26th of December 1991, the Red Banner of the Soviet Union was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time.[818] For many, it was a moment of great optimism; the Soviet giant, long having haunted Europe, had met its bitter end. In Moscow, however, the collapse of the Soviet Union was viewed as not merely the end of an ideological consensus, but the dramatic reversal of over three centuries of Russian geopolitical ambitions. In truth, the final death of Russian *Imperium* had come four months earlier, when on the 19th of August 1991, Communist Loyalists attempted to overthrow the reformist government of *President*[819] Mikhael Gorbachev.[820] Reminiscing on the failure of the Coup and its impact, Gorbachev would later remark that "after 19 August the Union disappeared all by itself; it was gone in a day".[821]

Certainly for some time, it appeared to be the case – and not just for the Soviet Union, but for the increasingly decentralising Russian Federation itself. Yet within two years, another coup, the Presidential Coup of 1993, had reversed such democratic trends, restored centrality on Moscow (and the President), and reorientated Russian foreign policy towards re-establishing its informal empire.[822] Four years later, Moscow emerged with such confidence on the world stage as to infamously challenge the west in the 2007 Munich Press Conference.[823] Thus, contrary to the *Motylian* expectations, the Russian State did not remain "[too] fragmented and too weak" to reclaim its former *Imperium*.[824] On the contrary, the Kremlin, contrary to expectations, rapidly reasserted control over both core territories and influence over its *near abroad*. This chapter will seek to explain the geopolitical origins of Russia as an institutional anomaly. It will then expand on how Russia was able to survive the 1990s and, using its unique institutions and its former empire as a crutch, re-emerge as a dominant player in Eurasian politics.

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[818] (Hoffman, 2000)
[819] Note: The creation of a *President* role was as part of the widespread reforms of Gorbachev.
[820] (Dunlop, 1995, p. 187)
[821] (Yeltsin, 1995, p. 85)
[822] (Wood, 2018, p. 141)
[823] See (Roth, 2007); *A Hint of the Cold War*.
[824] (Motyl, 1999, p. 141)

4.1 Feudalism of the Rus'

With a cartographer's pen and a map, drawing a straight line approximately 300 kilometres directly north of Prague brings one to the *Oder River*. Since the 10th Century AD, the Oder has served as the cultural delimitation between Germanic polities to the west, and Slavic polities to the east.[825] Yet beyond the cultural significance, the Oder serves as a significant geographical marker: it marks the *waist* of the Great European Plain – the narrowest point.[826] The plain itself resembles an isosceles triangle tipped on its side – a funnel that expands eastwards, wrapping around the Sudeten and Carpathian ranges and finding its terminus at the Ural foothills almost 2,500km eastwards.[827] Simultaneously, the Plain expands from a width of just 467km at the Polish-German Border to almost 2000km at the midstream of the *Moskva* River. It is here, upon the banks of the Moskva, that the city of the same name, rendered in English as *Moscow*, was constructed in the 12th Century AD.[828] Moscow remains until the modern day both the capital of the Russian Federation, as well as the geopolitical heartland of the Russian *Imperium*.[829] The story of Moscow, and the institutions it developed, is thus the story of Russia and its imperium.

The Moskva, which flows into the Oka, Volga and ultimately terminates in the Caspian sea, ultimately derives its name from Volga Finnic *Mustajoki*.[830] The Volga Finns, whose modern descendants include the *Mari* people, had lived along the Moskva and Volga rivers for centuries.[831] The eastward expansion of the Kievan Rus from the 6th Century onwards, however, led to the incorporation of the future Russian Heartland into the fledgling Slavic Empire.[832] The Kievan Rus, which itself was an outgrowth of an earlier Turko-Slavic *Khaganate of the Rus*, which had Christianised in 988 AD under the rule of the Nordic *Varangians*.[833] Whilst the exact details of this ethnogenesis are shrouded in myth, the general narrative of Scandinavian Princes forming a feudal superstructure over a a

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[825] (Żurek & Derwich, 2010, p. 142)
[826] (Dathe, 1897, p. 422)
[827] (Kaplan, 2012, p. 16)
[828] (Krechetnikov, 2017)
[829] CIS Notes
[830] "Black River" according to reconstructions of Mari.
[831] (Janse & Tol, 2003, p. 108)
[832] (Christian, 1988, p. 343)
[833] (Halperin, 1985, p. 27) – note that the institutions of rule and the role of the Nordic people in early East Slavic history remains unclear.

confederation of Slavic tribes seems to be supported by genetic, linguistic and historical evidence.[834] Subsequently, the Kievan Rus became a major *riparian* power, using its *Longships* to expand along Volga, Don and Dniper Rivers and ultimately as far as the Black, and Caspian Seas.[835] Such expansion came at the expense of not only the Finno-Urgic natives of *Uralia*, but also of its major rival to the east – the Judeo-Turkic Steppe Empire of the Khazars.[836]

The political system of the Kievan Rus remains a subject of debate amongst historians.[837] From that which is known, however, is that within the lands of the Kievan Rus, a system of quasi-*feudalism* developed.[838] *Feudalism* broadly describes the series of hierarchical relationships between a King, the lords who rule his lands, their vassals who guarantee the rulership, and the peasants (or serfs) who work the land.[839] In the words of American Historian George Vernadsky, it is the combination of three main factors; the "mediatization of supreme political authority", the "existence of a *manorial regime*", and "an indissoluble fusion of personal and territorial rights, the control of the land by the vassals being stipulated by the service rendered to their seignior".[840] The *Manorial Regime* spoke of by Vernadsky describes an arrangement whereby the peasantry, tied legally to the land, work the land (owned by a lord) in exchange for protection of that lord or other authority.[841] Such a labour regime is often referred to as *Serfdom*, and whilst it is tied to *Feudalism* – it can exist, and indeed does so, independently of the latter.[842]

Under the *Feudal* rubric, Land was often (but not exclusively) held in *Feudal Tenure*, wherein, as noted by Vernadsky, *control* of the land, known as an *Estate in Land,* was

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[834] (Freeze, 2023, p. 3)

[835] (Donald, 2005, p. 225)

[836] (Petrukhin, 2007, p. 245)

[837] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 896)

[838] See (Vernadsky, 1948, p. 6); The System cannot be considered "Feudalism" as known in Western Europe, however it did develop landed estates, (somewhat) manorialism, and a system of devolved power somewhat resembling the late Roman period.

[839] (Nicolas & Courthope, 1857, p. xviii)

[840] (Vernadsky, 1948, p. 4)

[841] (Blum, 1957, p. 808)

[842] Serfdom is defined as "the situation of a person who is personally and legally free but is tied to his place of residence and to his work, a bondage which is recognized and protected by the state." See (Rostovtzeff, 1926, p. 198)

contingent upon "[continued] *service* rendered to their seignior".[843] *Control* is a key term in this instance, as per *Feudal* principles, *Nulle Terre sans Seigneur* ("There can be no land without a lord"), and thus all non-freehold property belonged ultimately to the Crown.[844] The Service, to be provided to the King or superior lord, could take numerous forms, including *Barony* (annual military service), *Serjeanty* (non-military service, such as labour or civil work), *Ecumenic* (religious services), or *Socage* (possession through payment of taxes).[845] Whilst such a social arrangement may seem horrifying to the modern citizen, it was the Feudal System, and the tensions it produced, that paved the way for *Parliamentarianism* and *Capitalism* across Europe.[846]

As military service is considered part of *Feudal Tenure*, the existence of *Feudalism* necessarily negates the existence of a Standing Army; battles of the day were thus a matter of various *manorial* armies fighting under a single King.[847] The result of the King delegating the *Auctoritas* of their armies to vassals means that there was no "state" in the *Weberian* Sense – no single authority with an "absolute" monopoly on violence.[848] As such, diplomacy was not uniformly conducted on a "state to state basis", but rather, between the sub-state *Feudal* institutions.[849] Such differs significantly from the diplomatic and military traditions of Steppe empires, which, due to the patrimonial nature of sacral kingship and the comitatus, were centralised upon the Khagan and his patrimony.[850]

As with all *Feudal* regimes, Kiev administered its territories in a loose non-proprietary confederation. Initially, the territories of the Kievan Rus' were ruled by elective councils known as вѣще (*věšte* – "talks").[851] Such councils predate the foundation of the Kievan Rus' and, like their equivalent structures in other European kingdoms grew in parallel to the imposition of higher authority.[852] By the late Kievan Rus' period, each of the

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[843] (Vernadsky, 1948, p. 4)
[844] (Lucas, 2016, p. 48)
[845] (Lucas, 2016, p. 49)
[846] (Comninel, 2000, p. 50)
[847] (Contamine, 1984, p. 34)
[848] (Weber, 1968, p. 58)
[849] (Duran, 2019, p. 2)
[850] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 12)
[851] (Kollman, 1990, p. 300)
[852] (Martin, 2007, p. 78)

territories, or *Во́лость* (*Volost'* – "Power(s)"), was administered by a *Къна́зь* (*K'nyaz* – "Prince") of the ruling Rurikid Dynasty – each owing nominal loyalty to the centre.[853] The princes practiced *Collateral Sucession*, whereby "members of the dynasty were assigned territories for their upkeep" and wherein the territories were ranked and ruled by the princes according to seniority.[854] Each prince was therefore accountable both to the senior prince in Kiev, but also to the вѣще of their local appanage. The бояри (*Boyari* – "aristocracy"), or *Boyars*, were more than willing to leverage commerce, the capitol, or the church in order to keep their local ruler in check. As with elsewhere in Europe, the Grand Prince of Kiev was limited in their capabilities and had to respect the delicate power balance between the centre and the periphery, the clergy and the nobility.

Relevant to Moscow's later survival and institutional development, the *Feudal* system was most intense in the core territories, and became increasingly less enforced on the frontier.[855] There, beyond the feudal squabbling of the Rus' proper, a martial and colonial culture developed on the periphery, akin to that which would develop under the far-flung territories of later Colonial Empires. The ring of forts throughout *Uralia*, of which Moscow was part and parcel, was completed under near continuous interactions with the Steppe.[856] As noted by Soviet historian Peter N. Tretyakov;

> "In general, the colonization of Finno-Ugric lands [in the 10-12th Centuries] proceeded differently [to the migration of Slavs into the Baltic region in the 8th-9th Centuries]. It relied on fortified cities and armed squads. Martial lords resettled peasants to new lands. The local population was subject to tribute and placed in a dependent position".[857]

As with all Steppe Empires, the ultimate destruction of the Khazar Khaganate was achieved not through military conquest, but through the collapse of its internal system of tribute. Nonetheless, Khazaria had served as a useful buffer between the Kievan Rus and

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[853] (Madariaga, 2014, p. 354)
[854] (Kollman, 1990, p. 377)
[855] (Tretyakov, 1952, p. 11)
[856] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 178)
[857] (Tretyakov, 1952, p. 125)

the rest of the Eurasian.[858] The loss *Pax Khazarica* by the end of the 10th Century, then, brought a sustained assault against the walls of Kiev from Eurasian Steppe Nomads such as the Magyars, Bulgars, Pechenegs, Cumans, and ultimately, in 1237, the Mongols.[859] As these numerous "Tatars" pillaged the core territories, the peripheral city-colonies began to assert increased autonomy and subsequently came into conflict with each other.[860] Moscow, which had emerged as a fortified colonial outpost by 1147, now became a major power amongst the ruins of the former Kievan Rus'. Yet it did so under the so-called *Tatar Yoke* – a factor that would have a significant impact on the development of Russian institutions.

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[858] (Neumann & Wigen, 2012, p. 311)
[859] (Golden, 2011, p. 63)
[860] (Gorskiy, 2004, p. 484)

4.2 From House to hegemon

The emergence of Moscow as the primary "gatherer of Russian Lands" is, in retrospect, a historical anomaly. Indeed, prior to Moscow's emergence on the map, the torch of Kievan civilisation had seemingly passed to the three great successor states; the Novgorod Republic in the North, the Grand Duchy of Vladimir in the East, or the Kingdom of Galicia–Volhynia in the South-West.[861] With the Mongol invasion, however, the political order in the former *Rus* lands was completely overturned. Overnight, the hierarchy of *Rus* princes was cast aside as the Mongol administration, in the form of the Golden Horde, patronised whom they considered adequate through the use of *yarliq*.[862] The Mongols also brought with them four conditions of rule:

> "the ruler must come personally to court, sons and younger brothers are to be offered as hostages, the population must be registered, militia units are to be raised, taxes are to be sent in, and a [Bašqaq] is to take charge of all affairs"[863]

The Mongols simultaneously shattered the Feudal order in the Rus Lands, whilst imposing modern aspects of statehood, such as population registration, a standing army, taxation and a depersonalised beureaucracy. In this new system, the most submissive princes of the Rus lands, such as the famed Alexander Yaroslavich "Nevsky" and his father Yaroslav, became the enforces of the Tatar Yoke.[864] As noted by Marie Favereau, "if the grand prince needed military help [against a foreign or domestic threat], the khan could not turn him down. The Jochids were the overlords, but they knew their duties".[865] As such, "Nevsky, rather than [the Rus' people], was the beneficiary of these machinations."[866]

Nevsky and his successors would receive their rulership not through a council of boyars, but through appointment at the Tatar capital of Sarai. Their rule over the Rus' Lands, therefore, was not based on Rurikid principles, but on their willingness to work with the Tatars, safeguarded by the Tatar legitimacy and confirmed by "an escort of 500 [Tatar]

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[861] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 894)
[862] (Ponomareva, 2021, p. 583)
[863] (Allsen, 1987, p. 114)
[864] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 120)
[865] (Favereau, 2021, p. 226)
[866] (Halperin, 1985, p. 49)

warriors".[867] Nevsky, having paved an alternative path to rule over the *Rus* lands, created the conditions for Moscovite Autocracy. In the words of Kenneth W. Harl: "[Nevsky and his heirs] saluted [the Mongol Khan, Batu,] and his heirs as Tsar, the Slavic for Caesar, and so the secular lord of the Orthodox world… forging the future ideology and institutions of autocratic Russia".[868]

In such circumstances, a small *Suzdalian* timer-fort outpost *на москве* (*Na Moskve* – "on the Moskva River"), and the town that sprung fourth from it in 1147, rapidly grew in importance.[869] Possessing a favourable geographic position upon a tributary of the great Volga river, Moscow benefited from the nearby north-south trade whilst being sheltered in equidistance from the steppe and the centralising Scandinavian kingdoms to the north.[870] Yet it also benefited in its timing; being weak when the Horde was strong meant that it avoided being forcefully partitioned, whilst being strong while the Horde was weak allowed Moscow to increasingly play the role of the enforcer against the other principalities.[871] In such punitive expeditions, Moscow was often joined by the Tatars themselves – a factor that would transform the Muscovite way of war. As noted by one observer; "The main part of the Muscovite army fought not on foot but altogether on horseback, and they use short stirrups in the manner of the [Tatars]".[872]

Such changes also had an administrative function, with the Moscow princes adopting the *Ям* (*Yam* – "routes") – a pre-modern relay system which survived well into the 19th Century.[873] In the words of historian Marie Favreau, the *Yam* allowed "fewer than a million Mongols scattered over huge distances [to] rule an empire almost a continent in size".[874] It would allow the Muscovite Princes to do likewise; the establishment of a pre-modern police force provided Moscow with relative safety, drawing in refugees from other parts of the Rus Lands.[875] The influx of refugees from the south, many of whom were the former

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[867] (Figes, 2022, p. 69)
[868] (Harl, 2023, p. 322)
[869] (Figes, 2022, p. 23)
[870] (Braithwaite, 2022, p. 46)
[871] (Vogel, 2002, p. 94)
[872] (Ostrowski, 1998, p. 51).
[873] (Hosseini, 2005)
[874] (Favereau, 2021, p. 128)
[875] (Neal, 2006, p. 10)

Rus' lower gentry, gave Moscow both the mans and the motivations to expand – lest such new arrivals turned their swords inwards.[876] Consequently, by the beginning of the 14th Century, under the rule of Prince Daniil Alexandrovich, Moscow began to expand beyond its legally recognised posessions.[877] Whilst the new arrivals brought experience and legitimacy to the court, they also brought potential challenges to the dynasty.[878] Muscovite princes would seek to limit the power of the Rus nobility to the greatest extent possible.[879] In this endeavour, the ongoing support of the Horde would be invaluable.

The conquest of Mozhaisk and Kolomna in 1301 gave Moscow access to the Oka River, a tributary of the Volga, and thus sealed the primacy of Moscow amongst the other Rus principalities.[880] Being able to connect itself to the riparian trade of the Volga granted Moscow significant advantages – for one, it made the Moscovite princes contenders for intermarriage with the Khans of the Golden Horde.[881] Yury, Daniil's son, expanded Moscovite control up the Neva river and formed a close familial relationship with Öz Beg Khan by marrying the Khan's sister.[882] Such closeness to the Khan allowed Prince Yury's brother, Ivan I *Kalita* (literally "Moneybags"), to lobby the Khan for increased privileges as the official tax collector amongst the Muscovite princes.[883] When the citizens of Tver, led by the Grand Prince Alexander, rebelled against Mongol authority in 1327, it was Ivan I who led the punitive force.[884]

Consequently, the Golden Horde abolished direct tax collection through the Mongol *Bašqaqi* (military governors) and instead shifted to the extraction of tribute through native *Russian* counterparts – selecting the loyal Ivan I *Kalita* to become the governor under the title of the Grand Prince of Vladimir.[885] Overnight, the Daniilovich Dynasty had transitioned from a mere house amongst the Rus' Principalities to the hegemon of the Rus'

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[876] (Gorskiy, 2004, p. 807)
[877] (Kuchkin, 1995)
[878] (Gorskiy, 2004, p. 808)
[879] (Vogel, 2002, p. 94)
[880] (Gorskiy, 2004, p. 809)
[881] (Longworth, 2005, p. 136)
[882] (Martin, 2007, p. 195)
[883] (Palmer, 2015)
[884] (Favereau, 2021, p. 229)
[885] (Halperin, 1985, p. 89)

Lands. Such a shift was beneficial from the perspective of the Khans of the Golden Horde, who sought to simplify the extractive relationship between the metropole and its Russian vassals.[886] Yet it was also immensely beneficial from the perspective of the Moscovite Princes, who were able to defang the remains of *Feudalism* within the Rus' lands and curtail the powers of the *Boyars* within their own domains.[887]

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[886] (Halperin, 1985, p. 30)
[887] (Alef, 1967, p. 90)

4.3 The Beylik of Moscow

The consequences of the shift were far deeper, however, on shaping the trajectory of Muscovy and the nascent Russian Empire. Ivan I was the first of the "Three Ivans" – that is, Ivan I (1328-1340),[888] Ivan III (1462-1505),[889] and Ivan IV "The Terrible" (1547-1584) – who did away with the remains of European *Feudalism*, and, in leveraging the Steppe Tradition, transformed the Muscovite State into a "perfect absolutism".[890] Ivan IV's infamy in this process means that he is often viewed as the historic creator of Russian autocracy.[891] Yet Ivan IV, did not create the institutions of his rule. Rather, in the 300 years since the fall of the Kievan Rus', the institutions of Feudalism had been under constant erosive pressure. The result was that the Moscovite State emerged from "Tatar Yoke" having adopted the institutions of the Steppe.

Whilst in recent years there has been a school of *denialists* who downplay or outright deny the impact of Mongol Rule on Russian institutional development,[892] words vital to governance – such as *Караул* (*karůl* – "guards"), *деньги* (*deňgi* – money), *таможня* (*tamožňa* – "customs duties") and *Казна* (*kazna* – "treasury") – suggest that such innovations were partly the result of Tatar rule.[893] As spurious as an argument of *Īnstitūtiōnēs ex vocābulāriī* may seem, there is an argument to be made here. It is known by philologists, for instance, that the Mongol word for "book", *ном* (*nom*), is derived from the Greek *νόμος* (*nomos* – "law"), a manifestation of the process by which books came to exist as a means of keeping laws in the Mongol Empire.[894]

This is not to deny the influence of Byzantine political philosophy on the development of the Russian State – such influence was particularly influential in the Kievan period, and indeed survived in later ecclesiastical justifications for autocracy (discussed below). Rather, it is to suggest that the influence of the Eastern Roman Empire on the Kievan Rus

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[888] (Ostrowski, 1998, p. 44)
[889] See *Reflections on the Boyar Duma in the Reign of Ivan III* by (Alef, 1967) for what Ivan III achieved specifically.
[890] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 548)
[891] (Figes, 2022, p. 200)
[892] See, for example, (Likhachev, 2007, p. 21), who states that Tatar rule resulted in "very little" influence.
[893] (Figes, 2022, p. 45)
[894] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 100)

was never so direct as that of Tatar Rule – and that such "[political] traditions gradually disappeared during the Mongolian period of Russian History".[895] Where such attempts at Byzantine-style Autocracy had been attempted in the absence of Mongol support – as in the case of Prince Andrey I Bogolyubsky of Vladimir-Suzdal (1111-1174) – it was met with violent and ultimately successful opposition from the Boyars and the body politic more generally.[896] Furthermore, the Byzantine *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which came to play a major role in the rise of humanism in the west – was almost entirely neglected by the Rus' Princes and their Muscovite Successors.[897] As noted by Legal Historian George Weickhardt;

> "The fact that Rus' and Muscovy imported only the provincial law manuals and not the Justinianic corpus limited how deeply the Rus' and the Muscovites would ever appreciate law as seamless theoretical web and as a wellspring for concepts of fundamental rights".[898]

The inception of Russian Law and institutions was thus not Byzantine in nature, but Mongolian. With regard to tax collection, for instance, the Muscovite princes adopted the decimal census methodology of the Tatars – something that had been a staple of the Steppe Tradition since the time of the Xiong-nu and their competitive state-building vis-à-vis the Qin.[899] This system impressively provided the Muscovite state with a level of *state awareness* not seen in Western Europe until the "Age of Absolutism" in the Seventeenth Century.[900]

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[895] (Dvornik, 1956, p. 121)
[896] (Martin, 2007, p. 100)
[897] The Justinian Code (*Corpus Juris Civilis*) had compiled the Roman Laws and Christian Theological arguments into a single corpus. As (Tenburg, 2023) writes; "Through Christian beliefs, such as all people being made in the imago Dei, a greater emphasis on human rights and equality are seen within the Corpus Juris Civilis than among earlier Roman legal documents"
[898] (Weickhardt, 2005, p. 22)
[899] (Favereau, 2021, p. 132), although note that this origin is disputed by the existence of the system in earlier steppe empires – see (Buell & Kolbas, 2016, p. 43).
[900] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 135)

The *Порука* (*Poruka* – "suretyship"), a system of collective punishment, was adapted and perfected by the fledgling Muscovite state.[901] Althouth *Poruka* had existed in the Kievan Rus for taxation purposes, it was revived in Muscovy and directed towards policing – resembling more-so the Steppe model of *deputisation*.[902] As such, the same kind of "localised totalitarianism" common the Steppe regimes became the norm, as entire villages were held responsible for the misdeeds of locals (including their lords).[903] Such *misdeeds* included questioning the divinity of the *Tsar*;[904] a norm that had begun with the Tatar's *Immunity Charter* of 1267, and was enthusiastically adopted by the Muscovite princes.[905] *Caesaropapism* – the merging of secular and religious authority in a single individual – emerged as a fundamental basis of the new state.[906] Such means were seen as necessary to the ends of security. Both arable lands, as well as the people to work it, were limited – a factor that had made Steppe Polities the norm in the Eastern Rus' lands. As David Christian writes, "Autocracy was a response to the difficulties of creating an agrarian state in Inner Eurasia".[907]

Contemporaneously to the Golden Horde's abandonment of *Chinggisid Divinity* in favour of Islam;[908] the relocation of clerical authority to Moscow in 1325 laid the roots for its re-emergence in the form of the Russian Tsar under Ivan III. The Church – having collaborated with the Golden Horde to "convince its parishioners of the divine authority of the [Tatar] rulers" – was quick to shift its dependence and service to the rising power of Moscow.[909] The remaining autonomy that the Church possessed vanished following the *Moscow-Constantinople Schism of 1448*; an ecumenical split caused by an attempted reproachment between the Constantinople Orthodox Church and the Latin Church in Rome.[910] The Church thus had to legitimise their source of authority and defend their independence, and proclaimed Moscow the "Third Rome" – the prior two having "fallen to

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[901] (Dewey, 1970, p. 354)
[902] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 99)
[903] (Dewey, 1970, p. 350)
[904] Note that per (Cherniavsky, 1959), the title *Tsar* had been used by the Rus' with reference to the Tatar leadership.
[905] (Dewey, 1987, p. 118)
[906] (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005, p. 22)
[907] (Christian, 1992, p. 204)
[908] (Favereau, 2021, p. 100)
[909] (Kosinova, 2020, p. 218)
[910] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 42)

apostacy".[911] Thus, the state ideology of Moscow as the heart of orthodox Christendom took shape – a factor that persists to this day. In this decision, geopolitical considerations also played a major role. To the West, the rapidly expanding Lithuania had followed Constantinople into communion with Rome.[912] By advocating for an alternative suzerain for Lithuania's orthodox subjects, the Russian church assisted in the *Gathering of the Russian Lands*, and would secure its primacy in the post-Constantinople world.[913]

Having entered terminal decline by the middle of the 14th Century, the Golden Horde had, by the 1450s, fractured into numerous competing polities.[914] The confusion in legitimacy caused by the constant infighting between successor states meant that the role of *Tsar* (the title the Rus' had used to refer to the Khans of the Golden Horde and the Byzantine Emperors) remained vacant.[915] By transforming Ivan III from a mere Grand Prince of Muscovy into the *Tsar of all Russia*, the Orthodox Church created an instrument through which to rescue their flock from the Lithuanian heresy.[916] In return for the carrying out of this divine mission, the wealth of the church, which had expanded immensely under the Tatar Yoke, was inherited by the Muscovite Princes.[917]

That said, the domestication of the Church had significant outcomes on the balance of power within the state. Ivan III now had the power and means to "subordinate the princes to his will, absorb their private armies into his own army, and transfer such of their boyars as might be useful – and unconditionally loyal – into his own [bureaucratic] service".[918] The nobility was stripped of the last autonomous source of authority to which they could potentially rally.[919] There would be no equivalent in Russia to the *Investiture Controversy*,

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[911] (Figes, 2022, p. 52)
[912] (Stone, 2001, p. 3)
[913] (Figes, 2022, p. 68)
[914] (Favereau, 2021, p. 298); These were the Khanate of Sibir (1405), Uzbek Khanate (1428), Nogai Horde (1440s), Khanate of Kazan (1445), Crimean Khanate (1449), Qasim Khanate (1452), Kazakh Khanate (1458), Great Horde (1459–1502), and the Astrakhan Khanate (1466).
[915] (Cherniavsky, 1959, p. 460)
[916] (Madariaga, 2014, p. 28)
[917] (Longworth, 2005, p. 74)
[918] (Longworth, 2005, p. 101)
[919] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 429)

which had decentralised imperial rule in the German lands.[920] In the words of British Historian, Robert Nisbet Bain, "The sovereign became sacrosanct, while the boyars were reduced to the level of slaves absolutely dependent on the will of the sovereign".[921]

As such, beginning with Ivan III, the Russian leadership moved against the nobility – transforming the *Boyar Duma* from the collective rule of four to eight nobles, as had been the case under *Rus Feudalism*, into "a customary institution with only advisory functions".[922] This is particularly evident in comparing the Legal Codes of 1497, which still showed some signs of Byzantine Law struggling against the inherited autocratic traditions of the Tatars, and that of 1550, which showed the triumph of autocracy.[923] As put by one observer, the latter had become a clear instrument of "centralization, and more specifically the increase in the power of the tsar and his central bureaucracy".[924] The Boyars were thus increasingly transformed into a *Comitatus*, entirely dependent on the Tsar for their status and power.

Matters of centralisation, initially directed at the domestic nobility, soon expanded to any form of potential resistance. The Church, having long balanced itself between the local Rus' rulers and their Tatar overlords, soon came to be subsumed into the state itself –a relationship was eventually formally recognised by the creation of the *Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church* in 1721.[925] Whilst many are quick to point out the fact that Byzantine Rule was also *Cesaropapist*, the degree to which the Church became a servant of the state was "something that no Byzantine Emperor would have contemplated or desired".[926]

More ominously, however, were the economic changes taking place within the new Russian state. Having emerged in a capital-poor environment, the Russian State, like the Steppe Empires before it, had been funded through a system of *кормление* (*kormlenie* –

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[920] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 585)
[921] (Bain, 1911, p. 89)
[922] (Alef, 1967, p. 90)
[923] For examples of Byzantine political thought, see (Dvornik, 1956, p. 171).
[924] (Feldbrugge, 2018, p. 739)
[925] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 538)
[926] (Runciman, 1957, p. 9)

"feeding"). This morbid term describes an informal practice whereby officials of the state were maintained through the plundering of the very communities they presided over.[927] As the fledgling Russian state began to assert its independence, it moved to formalise the practice – abolishing the beneficiaries and official institution of *кормление*, but notably not the practice itself.[928] Rather, the legal reforms that took place from 1497 onwards further tied the peasantry to the land – reinforcing serfdom at a time when Europe was moving to abolish it.[929]

Within Western Europe, the demographic changes caused by the Bubonic Plague increased the bargaining power of the peasantry vis-à-vis the nobility.[930] Prior to the plague, the control of serfs was maintained by the collusion of lords, who cooperated to capture escaped serfs and return them to their respective domains. Following the Plague, however, the lords competed for labour – and peasants knew full well that they could "shop for lordships" to find the best possible deal.[931] As such, the correlation between non-human and human "property" became inverted – those with access to the latter benefiting immensely.[932] The need of financing for wars (increasingly fought by standing armies), and the explosion of international trade, provided sovereigns with the means and motivations to raise finances through means beyond the traditional feudal relationships.[933] As Lawler et al. write in *The Law of Real Property*;

> "…The overlords of the Feudal period seem frequently to have been in necessitous circumstances due to the expensive wars of the time. Their [feudal] armies, also, were not dependable, due to the difficulty of obtaining personal services when and where they were needed. To remedy these conditions, personal services were gradually commuted into money payments [to be spent on the recruitment of a standing army]…"[934]

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[927] (Bogatyrev, 2019)
[928] Per (Feldbrugge, 2018, p. 842); A common misconception is that Kormlenie ceased entirely. Rather the institution of Kormlenie was maintained well into the 18th Century.
[929] (Trethewey, 1974, p. 40)
[930] (Clay, 2020, p. 3)
[931] (Courie, 1972, p. 257)
[932] (Haddock & Kiesling, 2002, p. 580)
[933] (Peters, 2019, p. 20)
[934] (Lawler & Lawler, 2000, p. 37)

Consequently, the duties tied to *Feudal Tenure* were increasingly circumvented in favour of a direct poll tax upon freehold land – *Socage*.[935] Sovereigns in the West therefore often became the champions of the peasantry against the nobility, albeit with cynical motivations.[936] Yet such changes were confined to select western States. Eastern European states had received the plague relatively late.[937] This, combined with Eastern Europe's relatively flatter geography and agrarian predominance meant that Serfdom was given a second life in Eastern Europe even while it faded in the West – encouraged in part by demands for eastern grain in those western economies.[938]

In the Rus' Lands, the lack of an intact *Feudal* regime meant that there was no existing system of Feudal obligations that could be replaced by mere *Socage*.[939] In addition, the long, flat expanse of the Eurasian Steppe was easily traversable and thus provided for three outcomes that encouraged the entrenchment of serfdom. Firstly, the expanding Russian state was in a state of constant war with its neighbours, and thus relied on a stable source of income grounded in the autarkic institution of Serfdom.[940] Secondly, due to the "open" nature of Russia's geography, serfdom was difficult to enforce – leading many to flee serfdom, joining emigres from the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth in forming militarised *Cossack* Communities on the Pontic Steppe to the Southeast.[941] Such financial drain led to the nobility relying on the greater administrative resources of the Muscovite State in order to enforce a kind of "State Ownership" from which they could commonly benefit.[942] Thus, Muscovy's geoeconomics forced the readoption of the social management of the Steppe Tradition, albeit applied to an agrarian society.

The coercive Muscovite state was therefore a product of the *Hybridizing Nature* of Tatar Rule. The Tatars, in parallel with colonial empires of the 20th Century, prevented the

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[935] (Comninel, 2000, p. 50)
[936] Often with the aim of increasing royal revenues vs the nobility. See (Strayer, 1980, p. 10).
[937] (Haddock & Kiesling, 2002, p. 580)
[938] (Peters, 2019, p. 20)
[939] (Comninel, 2000, p. 20)
[940] (Clay, 2020, p. 10)
[941] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 56)
[942] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 697)

establishment of *productive* forces (such as the trade cities of the 15th Century Western Europe), and instead preserved an *extractive* economy.[943] As noted by Mizuno et al. in *Inequality, Extractive Institutions, and Growth in Nondemocratic Regimes*, "extractive institutions can expropriate a large share of citizens' wealth, but [rulers] face a high probability of losing power by failing to garner citizens' support".[944] This risk of losing power is mitigated significantly by the existence of a higher authority – such as a colonial overlord – which would come to the rescue of the ruling regime.[945] Thus, the extractive institution becomes solidified, upheld by its beneficiaries who are, as a result of the institution, wealthy and powerful.[946]

By the end of Tatar Rule, Muscovite society consisted of the extractive state on one hand, and the productive classes on the other. Contrary to development in the west, the collusion between a subdued nobility and an all-powerful Tsar meant that the nobility could not form the necessary "National Alliances" that led to the collapse of Absolutism elsewhere.[947] The Tsar never sought to balance the power of the nobility by empowering a wealthy class of commoners, as there was no such class to empower.[948] Russia remained a *coercion-intensive economy* rather than a *capital-intensive economy* – the bulk of its wealth being directly drawn "raw materials, controlled by landlords who rely on [the state's] coercion to control and extract them".[949] This status quo would remain mostly unchanged through Russian history, and continues through to the current day.

In pursuit of such extraction, lands conquered by Muscovy were divided up into 55-acre blocks known as Четвёртый (*Četvyortyy* – "fourths") and assigned to servicemen in a system, known as Поместье (*Pomyestye* – "Service Estate"), which *prima facie* appears similar to the *Latifundium* of the Roman Empire or the *Hacienda* of later Spanish and Portuguese imperial projects.[950] Where the Поместье differed, however, was that it was

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[943] (Gill, 1996, p. 79)
[944] (Mizun, et al., 2017, p. 116)
[945] Although not all colonial extractive economies end up in such a state, see Java in (Dell & Olken, 2017, p. 31).
[946] (Mizun, et al., 2017, p. 117)
[947] (Peters, 2019, p. 3)
[948] (Lankina, 2021)
[949] (Goldstone, 1991, p. 176)
[950] (Altman, et al., 2003, p. 164)

merely *possession* which passed to the serviceman in question, and *not* private ownership.[951]

Indeed, Поместье were little more than a Russian refashioning of Steppe land management – the *Suyurqal*. As in that system, all lands were property of the Khagan.[952] They could therefore not be "owned" as in the classical European sense, but rather were presided over by military commanders for the duration of their assignment.[953] The system would remain the basis of Russian *Real Property Law* well into the 19th Century. Thereafter it would be replaced by a brief period of *Hybrid-Capitalism* under the *Witte System*, before returning in all but name under Bolsheviks.[954] Such systems were not irrevocable, however. Within Mongolia proper, Steppe land practices remained in place until the *Hybridizing* Qing Dynasty abolished it in favour of Han Chinese norms in 1692.[955]

The Поместье is notable, however, in how clearly it broke convention with the Rus' feudal estates. As Ostrowski writes; "In contrast to Kievan Rus', where the landowner took his land with him, in Muscovy when a Вотчиник (*votchinnik* – lord) left the service of the grand prince for another prince his property reverted to the grand prince".[956] Thus, whilst private ownership had existed under the Kievan Rus' and was thus adopted into Russian Law as the Вотчины (*Votčiny* – "Fiefdom"),[957] the Поместье gradually came to replace Вотчины as new lands were conquered and old land rights were further restricted under new law codes.[958] This contrasts from Feudalism in Europe, wherein the equivalent of the Вотчины remained in place (as "fiefdoms") and gradually transformed into *Real Property*.[959]

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[951] Whilst the *Hacienda* were distributed by the Spanish crown, ownership did indeed pass to the *Patron* and remained (theoretically) irrevocable and bereft of a service requirement as directly tied to the land. See (Figes, 2022, p. 73).
[952] (Natsagdorj, 1967, p. 266)
[953] (Sneath, 2001, p. 43)
[954] (Pipes, 1974, p. 214)
[955] (Natsagdorj, 1967, p. 267)
[956] (Ostrowski, 1990, p. 537)
[957] (Figes, 2022, p. 74)
[958] Specifically, according to the The Ulozhenie (Law Code) of 1649, Votčiny were rendered reclaimable property at the will of the Tsar. See (Hellie, 1988, p. 155)
[959] (Strayer, 1980, p. 13)

As servitors merely occupied the land and remained tied to the state, they remained "a landowning service class with only weak ties to a particular community".[960] Thus, economics combined with Moscow's geopolitical insecurity to forge an expansionist doctrine – the growth of the State bureaucracy, caused by the increase in territory possessed by the state, placed demands on the treasury, which in turn, prompted the further expansion of the territory possessed.[961] The culmination of an expanding bureaucracy was the creation of a "service state", in which "the executive ran everything [and] served as its own legislative arm, and its own judiciary".[962]

The domination of the bureaucratric class spread to other aspects of society, namely ideology. According to American Historian and Legal Scholar, Richard Hellie, "Muscovy had no universities, no not even any formally trained clergy, so its major jurists were the state secretaries who ran the chancelleries".[963] Yet it also drove up costs, forcing Muscovy to expand its lands in order to pay off its own executive. The *Steppe Cycle* had taken root in Muscovy.

Such an evolution did not, however, take place in the Rus' Lands beyond the Tatar Yoke. Parallel to the centralization that took place in Moscow, the Ruthenian prince Danlyo of Galicia-Volhynia, a princly state of the larger Kievan Rus, was charting a divergent path of statehood.[964] By leveraging the geographical proximity to the Catholic West, Danlyo avoided becoming a full vassal of the Mongols.[965] Whilst the nascent Ruthenian Kingdom would eventually be absorbed by the expanding Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania, this turn of events ultimately saved its nobility from Muscovite Despotism.[966] In the years following incorporation into the western kingdoms saw "the extension to the local nobility of the political rights enjoyed by their [Polish and Lithuanian] counterparts" and exposure to "the Polish model of noble democracy, the German model of urban self-rule, and the benefits of Italian Renaissance education".[967]

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[960] (Figes, 2022, p. 59)
[961] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 23)
[962] (Hellie, 1988, p. 175)
[963] (Hellie, 1988, p. 161)
[964] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 112)
[965] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 125)
[966] (Reid, 2012, p. 20)
[967] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 166)

This is not to imply that the Polish and Lithuanian models of rule were inherently superior or *progressive* vis-à-vis what developed in Moscow. For the average peasant, the oppressive system of *Serfdom* actually intensified under Polish-Lithuanian rule as foreign nobles rushed to carve up the new lands.[968] But it was *different* in that the Polish-Lithuanian form of *Serfdom* was more similar to the system of manorialism practiced by Feudal regimes elsewhere in Europe.[969] As a result, Polish serfs had a defined position within society wherein their rights were open to *elite bargain*.[970] No such autocracy existed within the elite to the same degree as in the Muscovite lands.[971] As for the Ruthenian nobility, they gradually merged with the wider Polonized *Szlachta* class, adopting the Confederation-wide *Social Culture* grounded in the pseudo-Turkic *Sarmatism*.[972]

Yet they also adopted a tradition of resistance to absolutism, a factor that was absent in Muscovy. Thus, there were major differences in the relative strength of the nobility vis-à-vis the crown; in neither Poland nor Lithuania did the state become as centralised as under Muscovite rule.[973] Such examples as Ruthenia and Novgorod serve to prove that Russia's unique institutions are not the result of Byzantine Religious tradition, Slavic cultural forces or otherwise.[974] They are rather the impact of almost three centuries of statecraft with extraction in mind. As Legal Scholar Richard Hellie writes;

> "Part of [the Lithuanian and European] experience was the development of the notion of the legal state, *Rechtsstaat*, in which everyone, including the sovereign, was subject to the law. This occurred in a setting in which the monarch gradually was being paralyzed by the gentry and the representative parliamentary *Sejms*. In Muscovy, although formal conditions limiting the monarch were proposed… the

[968] (Wandycz, 1980, p. 16)
[969] (Vernadsky, 1948, p. 6)
[970] (Wagner, 1991, p. 383)
[971] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 113)
[972] *Sarmatism* was a belief amongst the Polish elite that held that the Polish nation was the descendants of the Indo-European Sarmatians of the Eurasian Steppe. Such was demonstrated by the adoption of Central Asian and Turkic aesthetics within Poland during the 16th – 18th centuries. (Kresin, 2002, p. 2)
[973] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 1047)
[974] Novgorod possessed decentralised institutions in the form of an oligarchic republic. See (Crummey, 2013, p. 33)

general evolution was toward a stronger monarchy in which the concept of *Rechtsstaat* had no place."[975]

In 17th and 18th Century Europe, *Enlightened Absolutism* – the abolishing of feudal privileges and modernisation under an all-powerful monarch – was the aspirational goal.[976] Yet of all European states to attempt absolutist rule, only Russia achieved it, and did so only through an entirely different evolutionary path.[977] Thus whilst Louis XIV of France proclaimed himself to be "the State" ruled almost absolutely, he was nonetheless was forced to legitimise his powers through the ancient *lois fondamentales*.[978]

As historian Mike Duncan states in *Revolutions*, "the idea that the Bourbons were running some kind of absolute monarchy is just a fantasy, whatever the palace of Versailles wants you to think. In reality, the king was hedged in on all sides by political and legal fences that had to be respected".[979] As such, attempts by European Monarchs to streamline their administrations ultimately became "disastrous failures" in the face of the united *body politic* that had emerged out of the very feudal structures they sought to abolish.[980] No such intuitional structures existed in the ad hoc Muscovite State.

By the time of the Great Stand on the Ugra River in 1480 – Muscovy's conclusive assertion of its independence against the Mongols – the Tsardom was by all appearances "an autocratic centralized empire"[981] in the form of a "well-ordered police state".[982] The Grand Duchy of Moscow had shrugged off the so-called "Tatar Yoke" and emerged as the Tsardom of Russia, possessing a relatively modern state structure relative to its European counterparts.[983] From the Tatars, the Muscovite State had inherited the Steppe Tradition

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[975] (Hellie, 1988, p. 168)
[976] (Duncan, 2014)
[977] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 1048)
[978] (Soubeyran, 2019)
[979] (Duncan, 2014)
[980] (Brooks, 2023, p. 122)
[981] (Raeff, 1983, p. 102)
[982] (Ágoston, 2011, p. 282)
[983] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 135)

and its *relatively modern* capabilities; a powerful bureaucratic and administrative apparatus, and a well organised standing army.[984]

Ivan IV's later tyranny during the period of Опри́чнина (*Opričnina* – "my part") lasting from 1565-1572 was merely the further consolidation of the norms of government inherited from Steppe Tradition and incorporated during Tatar Rule.[985] The revolutionary and anti-clerical actions during the Massacre of Novgorod in 1570, along with the large-scale population transfers in both Ivan IV's time and in later Russian history, all have their precedence in how the Steppe Empires managed their subjects and faith.[986] Such modernity allowed the Russian Tsars to defend their realm against the comparatively less developed states to the west (and indeed turn the tide against them in the case of Lithuania),[987] but it also fostered the roots of the tyranny seen in Russia to this day.[988] Muscovy had thus emerged not as the institutional successor to the Kievan Rus, but rather as an evolution of the Steppe Tradition – a *Beylik* of the Golden Horde.

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[984] (Gill, 1996, p. 77)
[985] (Braithwaite, 2022, p. 90)
[986] (Perry, et al., 2021, p. 72)
[987] (Stevens, 2007, p. 107)
[988] (Figes, 2022, p. 78)

Kipchak Administrative Structure of the Fourteenth Century

- khan
- high court — *beklaribek* — vizier — board of administration *daruga* and *basqaqs*
- foreign affairs
- army
- treasury
- 4 *qarachi beys* council of state — heads of *tümans*
- heads of regions and towns

Muscovite Administrative Structure of the Fourteenth Century

- grand prince
- prince's court — *tysiatskii* (to 1374) — *dvorskii* — *d'iaki puti (prikazi)*
- foreign affairs
- army
- *kazna*
- (boyar duma) council of state — *volosteli*
- *namestniki* regions and towns

Figure 13 – A Comparison of Muscovite and Tatar Political Institutions. (Ostrowski, 1990, p. 531)

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4.4 The Tsar-Khans of Muscovy

With the re-establishment of the full sovereignty of Muscovy in 1480, the fledgeling state was faced with an immediate geopolitical crisis. To the south and east lay the Eurasian Steppe. Extending as far eastwards as Manchuria, the steppe had long functioned as a thoroughfare for any would-be nomadic invaders seeking to push into Europe.[989] Whilst the Golden Horde had shattered, a collection of successor states continued to pose a significant threat to Muscovy's security. To the north-west stretched the Great European Plain. At over 1,000km wide, the Plain presented an insurmountable challenge to the security of the new state.[990]

Flat, open and indefensible, the plain is bordered by the Balkan and Carpathian ranges to the southwest, where it intersects with the historical region known as Bessarabia in modern Moldova and Ukraine.[991] The plain narrows as it stretches westwards, reaching its narrowest, a mere 300km wide, at the Oder River – the modern border of Germany and Poland. Such geopolitical circumstances mean that any invading force from the west would achieve increased manoeuvrability as it pushes eastwards, whilst any push into Europe by Muscovy would conversely see the consolidation of the enemy's forces.[992] Only the Ural Mountains, which nonetheless were inhabited confederations of Uralic tribes, presented a threat of a non-existential character.[993] Urged on by both its starving bureaucracy as well as its geopolitical insecurities, Muscovy began to expand.

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[989] (Marshall, 2016, p. 11)
[990] (Kotkin, 2016)
[991] (Paul, 2019)
[992] (Petro & Rubinstein, 1997, p. 4)
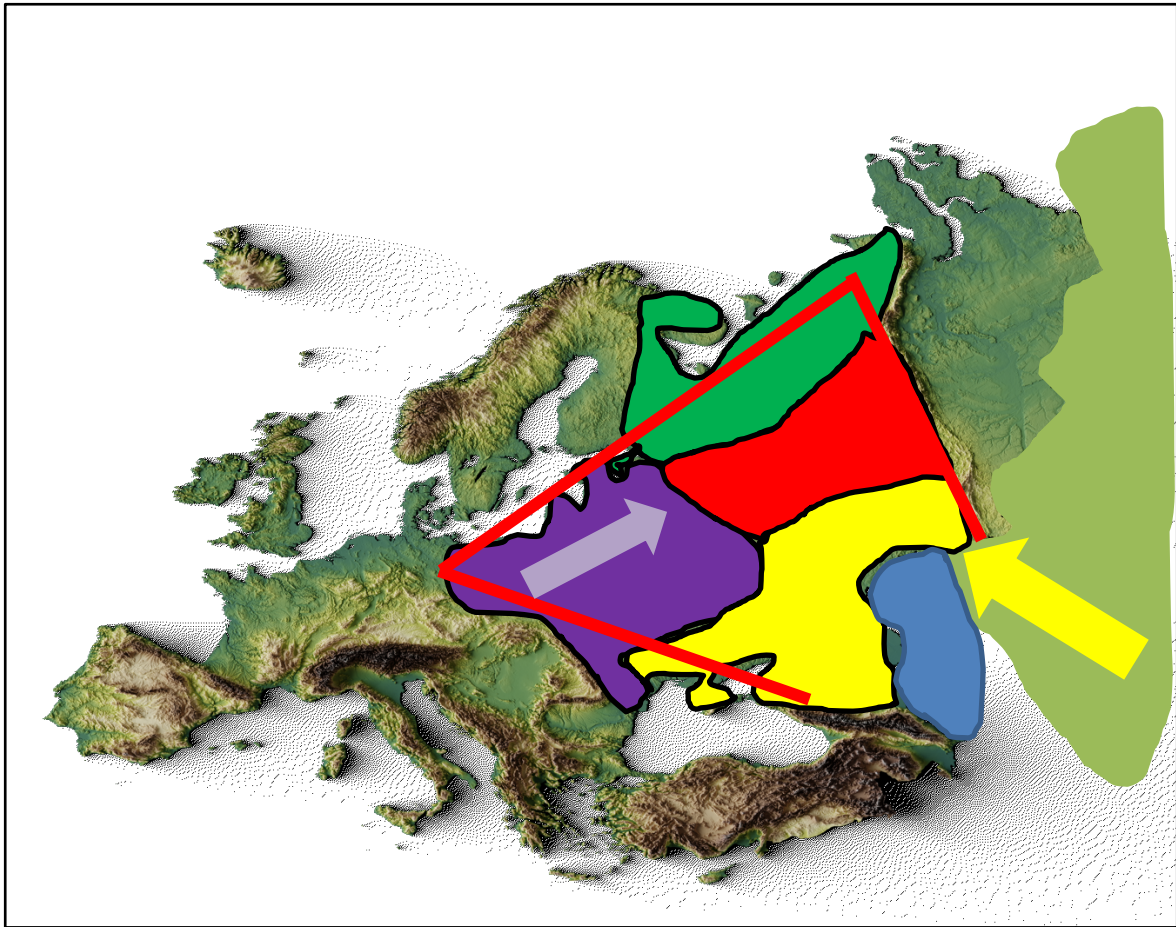[993] (Wiget & Balalaeva, 2011, p. 3)

Figure 14 – International Borders in 1418, showing the "Funnel" of the European Plain (Red Bars) and direction of expansion (coloured arrows). Note also the States of Novgorod (Green), Muscovy (Red), The Golden Horde (Yellow), The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Teutonic Knights (Purple).

Even prior to the Great Stand on the Ugra River, Muscovy had been consolidating its territory. Two years before the Great Stand, the Boyars of the Republic of Novgorod had questioned the supremacy of Muscovy in the Rus' System – opting for switching allegiance to Lithuania.[994] In response, in 1478 Muscovy annexed Novgorod completely, destroyed the *Věšte*, and proceeded to crush the Lithuanians in a series of wars ending in 1522.[995] Muscovy, upon the ruins of Novgorod, transformed into the Tsardom of Russia. The name "Russia" was an innovation with clear political intent.[996] It stated Muscovy's intention to complete the "gathering of the Russian Lands" – to emerge as the "True Russia" even whilst the name *Russia* was still used to refer to Ruthenian Lands under the

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[994] (Kotkin, 2016)
[995] (Paul, 2019)
[996] (Figes, 2022, p. 14)

Lithuanian Crown – those which make up Modern Ukraine.[997] Such formed the basis of the *Triune Nation* conception of Russia, which still informs Russian identity today.[998]

In such a conception, *Rus'ia* (the land of the Rus) is an entity composed of the White Russia (Belarus), Little Russia (Ukraine), and Great Russia (Russia proper).[999] In such a view, there is only one true form of "the *Great Russian* civilisation" – regional differences in culture and language are "regional".[1000] There is some truth to this. The distinction between a dialect and a language is political and, for the large part, arbitrary; the numerous "dialects" of Chinese are unintelligible, yet Norwegian and Danish, two "languages" remain almost entirely so.[1001] Nonetheless, "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy" remains the operative logic.[1002] Ethnicity becomes a nation only once it makes the jump into politicization.[1003] For the remainder of this paper, I have termed this theory *Pan-Rusism*.

With Lithuania in retreat, few remained to protest such designs – Russia thus turned its attention south and southwest. At the intersection of the Volga and Kama Rivers stood the Khanate of Kazan – an "Emporium of Steppe Trade" and one of the more formidable successors of the Golden Horde.[1004] Throughout the 15th and 16th Centuries, Kazan and Muscovy had jousted for control of the intermediate territories, with Moscow often losing out to the Kazan-Crimean alliance.[1005] As Muscovy grew in relative power under Ivan III, it had become increasingly involved in the internal politics of the Khanate – going so far as to secure the enthronement of a pro-Russian leader.[1006] In opposition stood the pro-Nogai and pro-Crimean factions of the Court, with their geopolitical orientations towards Central Asia and the Caucasus respectively.[1007] By 1550, however, the Nogai faction had regained control, provoking the ire of Moscow. The following year, a 150,000-strong force of

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[997] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 211)
[998] See (Putin, 2021).
[999] (Fishman & Garcia, 2011, p. 385)
[1000] (Holzer, 2022)
[1001] (Kamusella, 2016, p. 189)
[1002] (Abend, 2023, p. 225): The Weinreich witticism.
[1003] (Fialová, et al., 2010, p. 49)
[1004] (Longworth, 2005, p. 116)
[1005] (Figes, 2022, p. 61)
[1006] (Longworth, 2005, p. 117)
[1007] (Yemelianova, 2002, p. 28)

Russia's *New Model Army* laid waste to the city,[1008] beginning a five-year long bloody occupation that would end with the Khanate's annihilation as a political entity.[1009] Kazan would not re-emerge; its people would be converted, expelled, or slaughtered, and its lands would be parcelled out into Поместье.[1010] Having crushed Kazan, the Russian army proceeded down the Volga and bloodlessly annexed Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556 – opening the doors not only to the Caucasus, but to the Eastern Pontic Steppe and beyond.[1011]

The consequences of Ivan IV's *Crusade along the Volga* cannot be understated. Just as the conquest of the Lithuanian lands had solidified Moscow's claim to the *Tsardom of all Russia*,[1012] the elimination of two of the most powerful successor states to the Golden Horde "gave the tsar a new status, increasing his prestige among the steppe nomads as a legitimate successor to the Mongol khans".[1013] This newfound prestige would allow the Tsardom to secure the vassalage of the Circassians, Kazakhs and Bashkirs, albeit on different terms to the Russian majority.[1014] For the confessional Russian state, however, this was an ideological headache. In under a decade, Russia had transformed from an ethnically East Slavic, Orthodox Christian State with a messianic mission to liberate the *true believers* from *Tatardom*, into a "a multi-ethnic and poly-confessional State".[1015] In short, Russia had become an *Empire* – of which ethnic Russians themselves would form an increasingly minor part.[1016]

Like the Mongols before them, the entry of the Tsardom into Kazan and Astrakhan was marked by a period of extreme violence followed by a period of consolidation, as the

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[1008] The term *Russia's New Model Army* used here refers to the post-Tatar army composed of firearm battalions known as стрельцы (*streltsy* – "shooters"). Whilst differing in origin and development, the Sreltsy remained organised according to the patrimony. The term "New Model Army" is often borrowed from the English experience (1642-1651) in which professionalised army corps emerged. See (Ágoston, 2011, p. 319).
[1009] (Figes, 2022, p. 77)
[1010] (Kollman, 2017, p. 84).
[1011] (Figes, 2022, p. 62)
[1012] A claim solidified in its recognition by the Byzantine Orthodox Church following the "Crusade".
[1013] (Figes, 2022, p. 63)
[1014] (Longworth, 2005, p. 135)
[1015] (Yemelianova, 2002, p. 31)
[1016] (Christian, 1988, p. 326)

Tsardom abducted the Tatar elite to Moscow and "reached a modus vivendi" with its new subjects.[1017] To the Siberians and Caucasians, the Tsardom moved seamlessly into the role formerly occupied by the Mongol and Tatar regimes – with one contemporary observer noting "the Tsar, [having conquered their lands], distributed estates and arable land to them in the old way, and the blacks [the Tatars] paid *yasaks* in the old way, as they paid to the former khan".[1018] The use of *ясак* as the primary governing regime is telling – it signified a split in governance between that of the Russian Peasantry and the "new peasants" whose obligations to the state were "often not as onerous".[1019] The crusading ideology that had initially spearheaded the conquests thus gradually gave way to pragmatism, and "Even if the Orthodox Church had wanted a more energetic missionary role, the state did not support it… [the priority being instead] to keep tax collection stable".[1020]

Consequently, the Tsardom of Russia would emerge as neither a embodiment of Byzantine Orthodoxy, nor as a true successor to the Golden Horde from which it had emerged. Rather, the regime would become pragmatic in its As such, like the double-headed eagle on the Russian coat of arms, the Russian State now expressed two natures in one wholly *Eurasian* form, even whilst Eurasianism itself wouldn't be formally conceptualised until the 19th Century.[1021] Per the Steppe Taxonomy provided by Di Cosmo, whereas the Golden Horde had been a *Trade-Tribute Empire* that increasingly adopted agrarianism in its later years, the Tsardom of Muscovy was a sedentary polity that, shaped by the Tatar Yoke, emerged as a *Dual-Administration Empire*.

With this Steppe legacy, the *Tsar-Khan* appealed to either source of legitimacy as it expanded into the Baltics in the Livonian War (1558–1583) or across the Urals in the Conquest of the Khanate of Siberia (1558–1636). Whilst Russia would eventually achieve dominance in the Baltic following the Great Northern War (1700-1721), the economics of the war, and the long-term effect of being locked out of western trade further *Orientalised*

[1017] (Khalid, 2021, p. 100)
[1018] (Koshelev, 1856 [2012], p. 50)
[1019] (Kollman, 2017, p. 56)
[1020] (Kollman, 2017, p. 70)
[1021] According to (Laurelle, 2008, p. 3), Eurasianism emerged in the Nineteenth Century as a response to losses in the Crimean War (1853-1856).

the Russian State.[1022] In pursuit of furs, the colonial exploits of the Stroganov family in the vast unpopulated lands of Siberia would bring Russian power eastwards to the shore of the Pacific by 1639.[1023] Such rapid expansion led one historian to quip that "Russia expanded at the rate of one Belgium per year" – yet the wealth of Siberia was no laughing matter.[1024]

Such commodities, however, would need new markets. In this endeavour, Russia found a willing partner in the Shi'a Empire of Safavid Persia, who served as both a consumer of Russian goods as well as an intermediary to markets in the Middle East.[1025] So vital were the trade links with the Safavids, that, according to Richard Pipes in *Russia Under the Old Regime*; "Until the [end of the] eighteenth century, Russia's foreign trade was directed primarily towards the Middle East, especially Iran… [upon which] the Muscovite Government collected a *Тамга* ("Tamga" – a Mongol-era ad valorem tax)."[1026] Thus, the geoeconomics of Steppe Trade inevitably drew Russian Power into Central Asia and the Caucasus.

From 1580 onwards, the Tsardom had transformed Bashkiria into a vassal and established diplomatic contacts with the Kazakh Khanate.[1027] The nobles of Bashkiria, the *Tarakhans*, would conduct diplomacy on the steppe, manage the Bashkir territories, and collect taxes on behalf of the Tsar-Khan.[1028] In building a trade node at Ufa, Russia had thus entered the steppe, yet it would be another three centuries before the Russian Imperium completely consolidated its hold in the Steppe.[1029]

Thus, even whilst Central Asia would become enclosed by the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689, both powers would remain on the periphery – unable to devote resources to the conquest of the heartland.[1030] The numerous threats emanating from the European Plain kept Russia occupied, and there seemed little incentive to risk breaking the

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[1022] (Frost, 2014, p. 112)
[1023] (Longworth, 2005, p. 142)
[1024] (Giray, 1977, p. 189)
[1025] (Andreeva, 2014)
[1026] (Pipes, 1974, p. 205)
[1027] (Longworth, 2005, p. 139)
[1028] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 29)
[1029] (Gill, 1996, p. 30)
[1030] (Khalid, 2021, p. 97)

intricate balance of power that facilitated trade across the steppe.[1031] Consequently, until the 19th Century, the borderland between the empires of Central Asia and the periphery was sparsely populated by creole populations of the two great peripheral empires – the Slavo-Tatar *Cossacks* and the Sino-Tatar *Dungans*, respectively.[1032]

These populations would serve as intermediaries, bringing the numerous states of Central Asia into a relationship of informal and lose vassalage until the Qing Dynasty or the Russian Empire could muster the strength and undivided attention to subsume them into the fold of Empire. Until that date, however, the intermediary populations would shape the development of their home empires. In the meantime, Russia tried and failed to transform into a European Empire. The story of such failures demonstrates the durability of the Steppe Tradition in shaping institutional development.

[1031] (Christian, 1988, p. 315)
[1032] (Lipman, 1997, p. 24)

4.5 An Empire of the Russians?

The historical trajectory of the Russian Empire from the period of the fall of Kazan in 1556 to the collapse of the Romanov Dynasty in 1917 can be broadly categorised into three periods of expansion. Within each of the three periods of expansion, however, the institutions of the Russian State would change dramatically. Emerging from *Beylik* status to become a *Dual-Administration Empire*, the Empire increasingly *Hybridized* throughout the 18th Century. Throughout this transformation, Russian power would reach its pre-Soviet territorial maxim, incorporating all of Siberia and Central Asia. Nonetheless, Russia's continued attempts to *Europeanise* would fail, ultimately leading to the collapse of the empire under the weight of its institutional contradictions in the 20th Century.
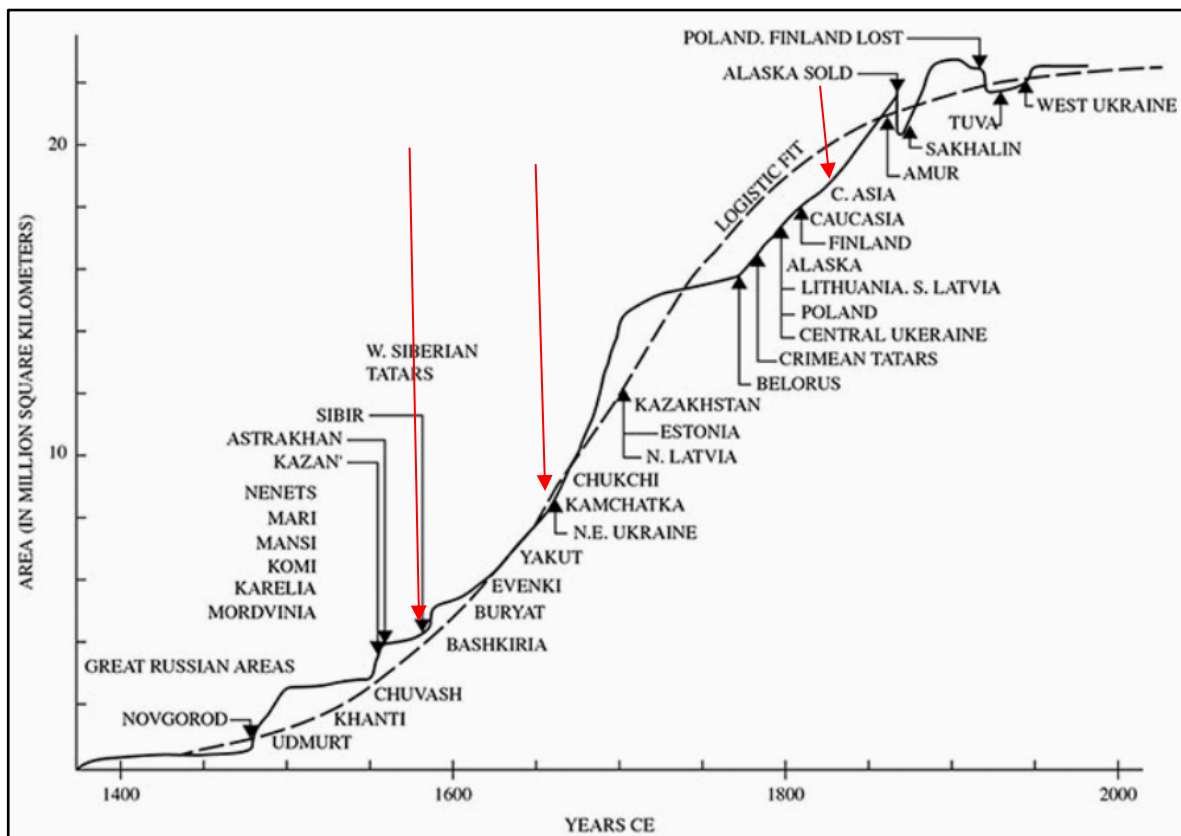

Figure 15 – The periods of Russian Expansion, per (Christian, 1988, p. 325). The red lines demonstrate the periods of Russian expansion.

The first period of expansion is marked in the initial thrust north-west into the Baltic and East across Siberia between 1552 and 1598, which has been the focus of this chapter. Following this first wave of expansion, however, Russia was beset with a period of internal strife and foreign invasions known as the *Time of Troubles* (1598-1618). Within Russian

historiography, *Time of Troubles* is often compared to the Russian Civil War, in that it saw the near-collapse of the State amid the During these years;

> "The Muscovite system, built up so painfully since the late thirteenth century, came close to collapse…[yet] the near collapse of the system also demonstrated its resilience. Despite everything, including several years of famine, civil war, and foreign invasion, the system kept working."[1033]

As with all periods of chaos in Russian history, this period saw the brief rise to power of the зе́мский собо́р (*Zemskiy Sobor* – "Assembly of the Land"). The собо́р was a feudal institution similar to the *États Généraux* of France – yet importantly, the собо́р developed in an ecosystem deprived of feudal rights.[1034] Thus, the собо́р lacked corporal interests beyond the preservation of serfdom and service-possession, and, with the previously discussed decline in feudal property, had mostly "faded out of existence" by the middle of the 17th Century.[1035] Despite throwing off the Tatar Yoke, Russian politics could not abandon Steppe Tradition entirely. Per Robert Crummey:

> "deeply entrenched habits of thought could not be broken… [contrary to elsewhere in Europe,] political demands of the period reveal no new visions of a just society and no plans for the reform or renewal of the state… [rather,] for noble and peasant alike, [absolute] monarchy, as it had existed under Ivan III or Ivan IV, remained the only form of government imaginable."[1036]

Thus, despite the chaos of Russia's situation, the State remained resilient, and indeed expanded; the number of прика́зы (*prikazy* – "orders, departments") growing from just 20 in 1613 to over 100 by 1650.[1037] This effective governing apparatus was crucial in providing for the rapid recovery of territory under the Romanov Dynasty.

[1033] (Christian, 1988, p. 351)
[1034] (Acton, 1995, p. 66)
[1035] (Acton, 1995, p. 68)
[1036] (Crummey, 2013, p. 226)
[1037] (Stepanov, 2006)

The Second Period (1667-1750) would see the Russian Tsardom seemingly adopt the aesthetics of a European Empire whilst entrenching itself even more firmly in the Steppe. During this period, the territory of Russia expanded from a size of 16 million square kilometers to over 22 million square kilometers, extending Russian control as far northwest as Turku, as far west as Warsaw, as far southwest as Chișinău.[1038] Yet, at the beginning of the period, it wasn't at all clear that Russia would succeed. A crisis of legitimacy rocked the Orthodox Church, the Russian elite became increasingly divided between Byzantine and French noble traditions, and the growing diversity of Russia's population presented challenges to the Slavic and Orthodox identity of the Tsardom.[1039] In addition, having reached the Pacific in 1639, Russia now possessed a vast, infertile and under-populated territory that was at mercy to the more populous and organised Central Asian States to the South.[1040] The solution to this multi-layered predicament, as it would turn out, was the conquest of Ukraine – something ultimately achieved by Russia yet not on Moscow's initiative.

Ukraine, as the name suggests, had, since the lapse of Tatar power, been a steppe borderland between the rising powers of Poland-Lithuania, the Crimean Khanate, and Muscovy.[1041] The descendants of the Kievan Rus' thus lived under the shadow of Muscovite Raider, Polish Crusader and Crimean Slaver;[1042] the latter trade keeping pace with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade until the late in the 18th Century.[1043] In such circumstances, the Cossacks, whose origins lie in Turko-Slavic creole populations on the Pontic Steppe, emerged as the natural protectors of the inhabitants of the former Rus' core territories – the Ruthenians.[1044] The term *Cossack* itself derives from Old-Turkic 𐰴𐰔𐰴 (*Kazaq* – "to raid") and shares its etymology with the modern Kazakh ethnic group – denoting a common identity on the Steppe.[1045]

[1038] (Taagepera, 1988, p. 3)
[1039] (Christian, 1988, p. 393)
[1040] (Christian, 1988, p. 322)
[1041] (Malikov, 2011, p. 112)
[1042] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 185)
[1043] (Antunes & Tagliacozzo, 2023)
[1044] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 178)
[1045] (Parton, 2016, p. 216)

As Mongol Rule had fragmented on the Pontic Steppe, groups of Tatars, who had withheld their submission to the various post-Mongol Khans, coalesced into numerous tribute-taking Steppe Polities.[1046] The consequent violence on the Pontic Steppe saw a significant decline in existing urban settlements, leading to the region earning the name "the Wild Field".[1047] The depopulated steppe was an attractive target for both the expanding empires of Lithuania and Muscovy, as well as peasants fleeing imperial serfdom.[1048] The result was the *ethnogenesis* of the *Cossack* – which came to be linguistically predominated by its Ruthenian Slavic element whilst still maintaining a "mixture of East Slavic and Tatar institutions".[1049] Although often in service to the metropoles of the surrounding Empires, Cossacks were politically and culturally distant from the surrounding empires, and were quick to change allegiance if their independence was threatened.[1050] It was through such political machinations that Russia, previously restricted to a small periphery between modern Sumy and Kharkhiv, came to possess most of Ukraine.[1051]

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in pursuit of modernisation, had placed increasing social and religious pressure on their Cossack vassals.[1052] The subsequent revolt, led by *Hetman* Bohdan Khmelnytsky, began in 1648 as the result of growing discontent against the Commonwealth's policy of *Catholicisation*.[1053] In revolting against the Commonwealth, Cossack elites sought first and foremost to preserve their privileges; to replace the *Szlachta* with a class of Ukrainian nobles.[1054] Thus whilst Modern Ukrainian nationalists see the Hetmanate of the Zaparozhian Host as a kind of proto-Ukrainain Democracy, such a position is unfounded from both a historical and an institutionalist perspective.[1055]

[1046] (Witzenrath, 2007, p. 36)
[1047] (Longworth, 1969, p. 11)
[1048] (Malikov, 2011, p. 16)
[1049] (Witzenrath, 2007, p. 37)
[1050] (Khalid, 2021, p. 99)
[1051] The small periphery in question was the Слобідська Україна (*Slobidska Ukrayina* – "Free borderland"), a fortified settlement that was free of tax obligations that stood as Muscovy's southern front against the Commonwealth and Crimean threat. See (Plokhy, 2015, p. 186).
[1052] (Jerzy, 1996, p. 86)
[1053] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 146)
[1054] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 473)
[1055] (Sysyn, 1991, p. 864)

Contrary to the Ukrainian Nation State of the 20th Century the Hetmanate – like previous Cossack Polities – was a Steppe Polity, complete with a mobile capital (*Nomas*), a system of joint civil-military administration, an autocratic *Hetman*, and a practice of *Direct Taxation* and *Kormlenie*.[1056] Land management, expectedly, was grounded in the traditions of the Eurasian Steppe: "Ownership of arable land, pastures, meadows, rivers and woods was vested in the stanitsa and these resources were the communal property of all members of the stanitsa".[1057] Thus, despite romantic allusions to the Cossacks as some kind of liberal and democratic alliance of free men, the reality is that the polity was governed by the age-old law of Steppe Autocracy:

> "Each member subordinated himself to the group's aims and decisions… a member would not even be allowed to leave once consensus was reached… In the steppe environment, unity was crucial, and even violent suspension of lingering doubts about the validity of the consensus could be a suitable way of stabilizing a state of harmony deemed necessary".[1058]

As with all Steppe polities, Cossack hosts were not *endogenously* identified by geographic factors, but by their leadership – which was only secured through the *Steppe Cycle* of redistributing "rich prey or booty".[1059] Thus, the *Hetman* or *Ataman* of the Cossack Host was equally hostage to the polity as any other member. Whilst such institutions of accountable leadership seem at odds with the later loyalty of the Cossack Hosts to the Muscovite Tsar, it should be kept in mind that *not all that glitters is gold*. Through the Tsar and his divine right, Cossacks could not only obtain official sanction in trade relations on the Steppe, but also immense spiritual wealth – something that was not able to be offered by the Catholic Commonwealth.[1060] As Christopher Witzenrath notes, Russian Orthodoxy and the *Chingghisid Dispensation* was key:

[1056] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 252)
[1057] (O'Rourke, 2000, p. 63)
[1058] (Witzenrath, 2007, p. 38)
[1059] (Witzenrath, 2007, p. 38)
[1060] (Malikov, 2011, p. 16)co

"All orthodox dead were publicly promised everlasting remembrance [through] entry in the [royally sanctioned] sinodik of Orthodoxy… [likewise] Mongol princes accepted the tsar as an equal 'Chinggisid', while they perceived Cossacks as traitors as soon as they were not in the tsar's service, refusing the right to trade."[1061]

Muscovy thus was able to incorporate the Cossacks as a separate estate – the *Comitatus* of the Tsar-Khan – a transformation which would render the future Cossacks not as freebooters, but as the enforcers of Tsarist autocracy.[1062]

Despite the resounding successes of Khmelnytsky's Uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Hetmanate remained in a precarious geopolitical position. The subsequent Treaty of Pereiaslav in 1654 brought Eastern and Central "Ukraine" into Moscow's *Imperium*, establishing a protectorate over the Zaporizhian Host.[1063] The Golden Orthodox Cage of Muscovy proved to be just that. As part of Catherine II's centralising reforms, the Zaparozhian Host was abolished by force in 1755.[1064] The Treaty of Pereiaslav was thus a tragedy for the inhabitants of the Ukraine.

For Russia, however, the Treaty of Pereiaslav was a triumph. With the stroke of a pen, left-bank Ukraine complete with its rich soil, or чернозём (*čyernozyom* – "black earth"), had come into Moscow's possession.[1065] Rich in organic matter, the Chernozem Soil would provide Russia with the ability to expand its population at a rate that outpaced its rivals in Central Asia and Europe alike.[1066] Between the years of 1678 and 1719, for example, Russia gained very little territory, yet its population increased by 50%, even as it suffered close to 120,000 total dead in the Great Northern War (1700-1721).[1067] Add to this the population growth incurred through the later partitions of Poland, and the population of the Russian Imperium almost quintupled, growing from 9 million in 1647 to 57 million on the

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[1061] (Witzenrath, 2007, p. 184)
[1062] (O'Rourke, 2000, p. 63)
[1063] (Frost, 2014, p. 180)
[1064] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 270)
[1065] That said, it would not be until the period following the Great Northern War (1700-1721) and the Battle of Poltava, that Ukraine was irrevocably consolidated within the Russian realm. (Magocsi, 2010, p. 210)
[1066] (Christian, 1988, p. 322)
[1067] (Bushkovitch, 2006, p. 491)

eve of the conquest of Central Asia in 1847.[1068] In the same period, the population of the Kazakh Khanate grew to a merger 3 million, with the other major Central Asian state, the Khanate of Bukhara, barely cresting 1 million.[1069] As David Christian writes;

> "[Technologies such as] gunpowder weapons and infantry troops, may have played some role in Muscovy's successes. But the same weaponry was available to Muscovy's opponents. More important was the capacity to mobilize and pay for modern armies. This depended on the ability of Muscovy's rulers to exploit the increasing demographic superiority of Inner Eurasia's largest consolidated agricultural region [in Ukraine]…"[1070]

In seizing Kiev, Russia had finally achieved its goal of becoming the "True Russia", and now had at its disposal the cultural legacy of the Kievan Rus' and a group of loyal native cadres ready to justify the place of "Little Russia" in the Empire of "Great Russia".[1071] Until this point, Russia had been some kind of Asiatic other – an empire on the fringes of Europe that ruled and fought like any other steppe empire. Now, the Russian State increasingly took the place of the Medieval Kievan Rus', finally establishing themselves as the last standing successor to the Metropolitan of Kyiv.[1072] Rejuvenation also came in the form of an experienced Ukrainian military elite, which, long having been part of one of the great European Superpowers, now served the Russian Tsar.[1073] Having long been derided as "The [Tatar] Empire of Moscovia" within Europe, Russia rapidly ascended to great power status.[1074]

The conquest of Ukraine marked a path of ascent that, with the conquest of the Baltic States 50 years later, would make Russia an unnegotiable reality in the Geopolitics of the North Sea, the Black Sea and the Balkans.[1075] Such a geopolitical boon allowed Muscovy

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[1068] (Moon, 2006, p. 374)
[1069] (Sarsembayev, 2015, p. 115)
[1070] (Christian, 1992, p. 207)
[1071] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 213)
[1072] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 215)
[1073] (Christian, 1988, p. 395)
[1074] (Milton, 1608 [2003])
[1075] The Great Northern War (1700-1721) is often marked as Russia's entry into European Politics from the European Perspective.

to finally be recognised on its own terms as "The Russian Empire".[1076] As summarised by Charles Steinwedel in *Threads of Empire*, "the incorporation of Ukraine in 1654 gave the tsarist state new confidence and freed more resources to address empire-building in the east".[1077] Yet what kind of Empire would that be? For the Russian Tsars, the conquest of Ukraine had reintroduced the Russian State to European Customs. Russia, as such, became self-consciously European, and sought to replicate the sedentary states of the continent.[1078]

As such, the *Petrine Reforms* (1698-1725), whilst seen as a dramatic divergence from Russia's previous history, were the natural consequence of Russia's new geopolitical space. Beginning in 1698, Peter the Great curtailed the rights of the nobility and clergy by assigning their functions to secular governing bodies such as the *Governing Senate* and the *Holy Synod* respectively.[1079] The church, having had a brief period of prominence at the centre of State ideology, now merged back with the "symphony" of institutions.[1080] The numerous ad hoc *prikazy* were simplified into a single governmental regime, and nobility were likewise stripped of many of their "official" administrative functions.[1081] Having recovered from the *Time of Troubles*, the State once again had the capacity to take censes and managed the economy in the age of *Cameralism*.[1082]

Thus whilst Peter the Great *Modernised* the state, leading many to see his reforms as making Russia more "European", he did so by leaning on the institutional legacy of Tatar rule.[1083] Peter, like Ivan IV before him, was yet another inheritor of the Steppe Tradition.[1084] As such, even the "Great Westernizer" could not escape "[the shadow of] "Chinggis Khan and Timur, [in creating] a nobility willing and able to serve an autocratic

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[1076] (Hughes, 2002, p. 210)
[1077] (Steinwedel, 2016)
[1078] (Figes, 2022, p. 211)
[1079] (Hughes, 2002, p. 148)
[1080] (Bremer, 2013, p. 75) states that the Russian Othodox Church's "symphonic" attitude towards state power was a direct rebuke to the Greek model from which it claimed original legitimacy.
[1081] For example the Qasim Khaganate, which was incorporated after having been an autonomous vassal since 1452. See (Kołodziejczyk, 2011, p. 102)
[1082] (Adler, 2020, p. 7).
[1083] (Fukuyama, 2011)
[1084] (Christian, 1988, p. 376)

ruler, and as bureaucratized as Moscow's officials and merchants".[1085] Such efforts of centralisation in pursuit of *Enlightened Absolutism* continued under Peter's successors - Empresses Anna (1730-1740), Elisabeth (1741-1762) and Catherine II "The Great" (1762-1796). The modern bureaucracy that emerged as a result would be fundamental in guiding the formation of Russia's colonial empire. And Russia, by this stage, becoming a *Colonial Empire*.

Colonialism can be understood as the practice of forming a *Colony* – that is, "a political body that is dominated by an exogenous agency, [through which the] exogenous entity that reproduces itself in a given environment".[1086] Whilst related to *Imperialism*, *Colonialism* differs in that that the Metropole does not seek merely to render the dominate the subject lands, but to repopulate and transform them into an extraction-focused extension of the Metropole itself.[1087] The term has its roots in the Roman *Colonia* ("farming estates") and is a cognate with the Latin *Colōnus* ("farmer").[1088] The term emerged to describe the extractive European farming plantations created in foreign lands during the 16th and 17th Centuries.

It therefore implies settlement, and thus differs from mere *Imperialism*, wherein domination may be assured by a detached elite; "[The Americas and Australia] were colonized. Most [but not all] of Africa and Asia, on the other hand, was imperialized".[1089] Other than a brief period of *crusader fervour*, the policy of Russia's early expansion was merely *imperialise* its subjects.[1090] When lands were conquered, the ruling elite was incorporated into the ruling dynasty's *Comitatus* in Moscow.[1091] For the remainder of the population, life continued as it had under any other Khan – religious freedom and local governance were guaranteed so long as neither challenged the rule of the Tsar.[1092]

[1085] (Christian, 1988, p. 412)
[1086] (Veracini, 2010, p. 3)
[1087] (Stanard, 2018, p. 20)
[1088] (Curtin, 1974, p. 22)
[1089] (Horvath, 1972, p. 47)
[1090] (Mayberry, 1998)
[1091] (Christian, 1988, p. 413)
[1092] (Weeks, 2006, p. 28)

In line with the *Europeanising* projects of the 18th Century, however, St. Petersburg began to question the series of presumptions that had held the Imperial Project together.[1093] Wanting to shed its "Asiatic image*"*, and seeking to replace "unproductive" Steppe nomads with "productive" Slavic agrarianism, St. Petersburg embarked on a programme of resettlement.[1094] In doing so Russia hoped to transform the "Asian and Stateless Steppe" into a bastion "European-Russian civilization", a task that would consciously emulate other colonial projects of the day, such as New Spain, New France and New England.[1095] In conquering Ukraine, Moscow had the "Loyal Orthodox Slavs" it needed to populate its fledgling colonies in Siberia.[1096] Thus, mirroring earlier and later patterns of population management, the colonization of Siberia was driven largely the deportation of "newly incorporated" Ukrainians eastward.[1097]

Armed with such demographic supremacy, Siberia was settled with such great effect, and native Siberians became a minority within 200 years of the conquest.[1098] The lands of Ukraine were, in turn, resettled by Russians – forming the Colony of Novorossiya by 1764.[1099] Such population transfers were not unique to Russia - they in many ways mirrored the Castilian planting of Andalusian settlers in the Americas,[1100] or the British repatriation and settlement of Irish people in Australia.[1101] The colonisation of Siberia thus saw the histories of Ukraine and Central Asia interwoven through the medium of the Steppe, and not for the last time.[1102] The framing of such as a "civilising mission" is, in retrospect, the mother of all ironies of Russian History; it was Russia's conquest of the Eurasian Steppe that gave rise to the contradictions that would re-invigorate the Steppe Tradition in Russian State-building.

[1093] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 13)
[1094] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 120)
[1095] (Sunderland, 2006, p. 70)
[1096] (Sunderland, 2006, p. 70)
[1097] (Nahaylo, 1999, p. 648)
[1098] (Christian, 1988, p. 613)
[1099] (Polonska-Vasylenko, 1955, p. 190)
[1100] (Boyd-Bowman, 1956, p. 1163)
[1101] (Mayberry, 1998)
[1102] (Polonska-Vasylenko, 1955, p. 3)

The architect of Russia's colonization of Siberia and Central Asia was, ironically, a Naval Officer named Ivan Kirilov.[1103] At the dawn of the 18th Century, the Russian presence in Siberia was limited to the trading posts that had been established by the Stroganov Families.[1104] Stretching through the north and centre of Siberia, they mostly covered what Donelly refers to as the "Forest Frontier".[1105] Now, inspired both by the Spanish Conquest of America and the Portuguese Exploration of the Indian Ocean, Kirilov called for the conquest of Central Asia as far south as the Hindu Kush.[1106] Kirilov hoped that, in lieu of discovering vast mineral deposits in Siberia, they would solidify their eastern frontier and open Russia's doors to the riches of China and India.[1107] That said, top-down attempts at building a *Pretrine* "National State" – that is, "a nation-state featuring centralized rule of an undifferentiated population with a civic basis" – only led to repeated rebellions in the 17th and 18th Centuries.[1108]

Standing between the Russian core and the Steppe, however, was the "Gates of Europe" and Bashkiria.[1109] To this end, Kirilov hoped to "expand the award of Tarkhan status and the freedom from paying [Yasaq] that went with it to those who served as allies in empire-building".[1110] In other words, he hoped to make the Bashkirs into "legal Russians". A Muslim Turkic people, the Bashkirs "had largely thwarted Muscovite authorities' efforts to reshape the local political and fiscal regime".[1111] Most resistance was peaceful, but that was not always the case. The largest of such rebellions, the 1773 Pugachev Rebellion saw the Empire almost shatter into pieces, as a broad coalition of Russia's minorities join the Tatars against the Kremlin.[1112] It was only through the enlistment of the recently arrived Kalmyks, a Buddhist Oriat people from Mongolia, that the Kremlin was previously able to subdue the Bashkir elite into negotiation.[1113] Russia thus learnt the hard way that a revival

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[1103] (Bagrow, 1937, p. 78)
[1104] (Christian, 1988, p. 442)
[1105] (Donelly, 1968, p. 2)
[1106] (Christian, 1988, p. 475)
[1107] (Donelly, 1968, p. 3)
[1108] (Tilly, 1975, p. 2) cited in (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 117)
[1109] (Longworth, 2005, p. 135)
[1110] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 46)
[1111] (Christian, 1988, p. 443)
[1112] (Longworth, 2005, p. 136)
[1113] (Christian, 1988, p. 442)

of the Crusading Ideology of the 16ᵗʰ Century, even if dressed in the petticoat of modernity, would only bring the Empire to ruin.

Kirilov may have died on the Steppe in 1738, but his policies bore fruit within two generations.[1114] Forced to abandon its pretentions of a European, Christian Empire, the Russian leadership once more looked to the *Steppe Tradition*. Like the Khitans, Arabs and Mongols before them, the Russians began to express through territory a dualism between the Steppe and the Periphery.[1115] Where there had formerly been русский (*Russkiy* – Ethnic Russians) and татары (*Tartari* – Tatars), there was increasingly российский (*Rossiyskiy* – The people of Russia), each who held "a unique, different, and unequal relationship to the tsar".[1116] Such a distinction was geopolitical, but also largely arbitrary. As Steinwendel notes; "If regions to the west of Bashkiria, such as Kazan, were fully integrated into the empire's core, areas to Bashkiria's east and south, Siberia and Turkestan, were not".[1117]

Nonetheless, St. Petersburg's readoption of Eurasianism would shape relations between Russia and the Steppe well into the 20ᵗʰ Century. The Tsars of Russia increasingly moved away from their status as the heads of the *Rusky Narod* and rather presented themselves as a *Golden Kin* served by a multinational *Rossisky Narod* through a system of imperial patronage.[1118] Whilst *Rusky* and *Rossisky* both are translated in English as "Russian", the former is an ethnic lable, whilst the latter – adopted by the Tsars – is a geographical lable.[1119] Ethnic Russians, as servants of the Tsar-Khan, would receive none of the privileges afforded to the *core national groups* of other Empires – leading some to question whether Russia had a Colonial Empire at all.[1120] The relative "softness" of its rule was a consequence of its structure. For their part, the Bashkirs would come to be celebrated across the Empire for their part in chasing the Napoleonic armies out of the

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[1114] (Bagrow, 1937, p. 82)
[1115] (Khalid, 2021, p. 13)
[1116] (Khalid, 2021, p. 120)
[1117] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 246)
[1118] (Khalid, 2021, p. 121)
[1119] (Alpaut, 2021)
[1120] (Morrison, 2016)

fatherland.[1121] The Circassians, who happened to be included in the "core territories" of the Empire, were not so lucky.[1122]

As Russia expanded into Central Asia in the 1850s, it presented its conquests in colonial terms to its European rivals.[1123] Yet beyond the headlines of the "Anglo-Russian Great Game", the reality on the ground was a kind of "benign neglect".[1124] Like the steppe empires of old, the arrival of Russian Power to the Steppe changed very little for the commoner. The Russian Empire was nothing new. It was a Steppe Polity ruled by a *Tsar-Khan* and his *Multi-national Comitatus* that demanded only men for its army and gold for its coffers.[1125] Long having subjugated the Church to the State, Russia increasingly equally institutionalise the Mosque. In a move reminiscent of the Tatar's *Immunity Charter* of 1267, the Russian leadership established a series of "Muhammedan Spiritual Assemblies".[1126] Having long tried to rule as a European Empire, the Crown was exchanged for an Uzbek Cap as Russia once again learned to play Khan in Asia.

[1121] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 248)
[1122] See, for example, the Circassian Genocide. Per (Grassi, 2018)
[1123] (Longworth, 2005, p. 217)
[1124] (Morrison, 2016, p. 245)
[1125] (Longworth, 2005, p. 218)
[1126] Per (Kirmse, 2012); Most famously in Orenburg and Crimea.

4.6 Cossacks and Kazakhs

The last great empire on the Eurasian Steppe, the Mongols, had fallen apart by the end of the 13th Century.[1127] A century later, in the early 1400s, the *Post-Imperial Order* of that Empire, also began to unwind – a product of divergent religious and cultural trends in each branch of the Dynasty.[1128] Nonetheless, the *Pax Mongolica* didn't disappear without a trace. It left behind the *Chingghissid Dispensation* of the *Yassaq* and the *Golden Kin*.[1129] Lacking a tradition of primogeniture, all descendants of the Great Khan had the legitimacy to rule the Steppe.[1130]

Nonetheless, there had been broad change on the Steppe. The Years following the Mongol Collapse saw the spread of Islam amongst the nomads of the northern Steppe, and the shifting of trade southwards and away from the internecine fighting of the Golden Horde and its subsequent conquest by Muscovy.[1131] The last major central Asian Dynasty, the Turko-Persian Timurids (1370-1507), barely reached beyond the threshold of a *Dual-Administration Empire* before entering a slow dissolution upon the death of Tamerlane in 1405.[1132] In such circumstances, the Shaybanids, led by the *Chingghissid* Abu'l-Khayr Khan, quickly monopolized power in the Uzbek Ulus, forming a *Dual-Administration Empire* of the same name by 1428.[1133]

The "Duality" of the Empire is key here, as the Shaybanids based themselves amongst the *Persianizaed* sedentary elite of Transoxiana even whilst they maintained an economy based in the *Steppe Tradition*.[1134] Specifically, sedentary southern lands were administered according to the *Iqta'*, whereas the north remained a product of the *Suyurqal* – Steppe commanderies absent of any proprietary value.[1135] For as long as the Shaybanids maintained the flow of tribute, they could rely on an inner frontier strategy.[1136] In the

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[1127] (Weatherford, 2004, p. 479)
[1128] (Allsen, 2001, p. 200)
[1129] (Khalid, 2021, p. 11)
[1130] (Khalid, 2021, p. 51)
[1131] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 28)
[1132] (Marozzi, 2004, p. 3)
[1133] (DeWeese, 2010, p. 345)
[1134] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 13)
[1135] (Adle, et al., 2003, p. 37)
[1136] (Di Cosmo, et al., 2005, p. 54)

aftermath of a defeat at the hands of the invading Oriats in 1457, however, the *Steppe Cycle* began to break down. the northern nomads broke away from the southern lords, forming the Kazakh Khanate.[1137]

Figure 16 – Kasym Khan proclaims the Žeti Žarghy. (Tolepbay, 2015)

Under the brothers, Жәнібек (*Žanibek*) and Керей (*Kirei*), the new Khanate rapidly expanded along the Syr Darya, establishing a norm of governance that would last for the next three centuries.[1138] By 1520, the Khanate had taken shape as a *Direct Taxation Empire*, moving above and beyond its Uzbek counterparts through the implementation of a set of laws that came to be consolidated under the Жеті Жарғы (*Žeti Žarghy* – "Seven Charters").[1139] This legal code, whilst drawing on Islamic morality, nonetheless administered the land and people of the Empire in a way not too dissimilar from the traditional way of life since the Xiong-nu.[1140]

Whilst some scholars have labelled the system of governance in the Kazakh Khanate a "military democracy",[1141] it was no less complrehensive (or intrusive) than any other

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[1137] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 29)

[1138] Per (Narimanovich, 2013, p. 750); the code would only variably lose strength in the latter period of soviet rule.

[1139] (Uzbekuly, 2005, p. 113)

[1140] Per (Akhmetova & Kozhakhmetov, 1997); "Zheti Zhargy should be interpreted as Muslim steppe laws". Certainly such seems to be the case, with the last two laws dealing with injury to eyes and horse theft – two factors critically important to life on the steppe.

[1141] (Ryszhanova & Cëmplak, 2018, p. 72)

Steppe system – regulating every aspect of daily life so as to maintain the cohesiveness of the polity.[1142] Like all steppe polities, the economics at the local level was akin to the *Kormlenie*, with "local" rulers plundering their assigned subjects directly.[1143] In such leadership, the *Chingghisid Dispensation* was maintained, with one of the two *Ak-Suyek* ("White Boned") aristocratic classes being the *Tore*, of *Chingghisid Descent* – the other being the *Khoja*, a religious leadership emblematic of Islam's growing prominence on the Steppe.[1144] As for the *Kara-Suyek* ("Black Boned"), the commoners, were not *ethnic Kazakhs*, indeed, such a category did not exist on the Steppe. Rather, the Khanate was "a confederation of turkic, [iranic] and mongol tribes" that, as in the case of all Steppe polities, "[conducted politics] on the basis of hierarchy and rules rather than kinship".[1145] Russians who fled southwards likewise found a home amongst the Kazakh, where they joined the existing bands of *Cossack* in service of the Khan.[1146]

Beyond direct taxation, the Khanate engaged in trade based itself on the provision of "cattle, skins, wool and fat [to Russia, Persia, India and China] in exchange for wheat, textiles, tools, and arms".[1147] So long as each of the peripheral giants kept their distance, the Khanate prospered and remained a consolidated unit. By the end of the 17th Century, the situation became increasingly difficult for the Kazakhs. The collapse of the Ming Dynasty in the east had given rise to the *Hybridized* Dynasty of the Qing – a Manchu dynasty that quickly expanded Chinese power into the Steppe.[1148] The Qing armies advanced on the tail of another Steppe polity, the Dzungar Khanate – a Buddhist Gunpowder Empire that rapidly expanded out of the Tarim Basin of Eastern China and into the Kazakh Steppe.[1149] The simultaneous consolidation of Russian power in the north made them a viable partner in facing off the Eastern threat. Consequently, the Kazakhs leveraged their traditional Steppe ties with the Eurasian Superpower through the dispatching of emissaries to the "White Khan" in St. Petersburg in 1726.[1150]

[1142] See for example, the 2nd Charter "Death to those who would betray the Turkic people".
[1143] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 33)
[1144] (Kassymova, et al., 2012)
[1145] (Erofeeva, 2004, p. 67)
[1146] (Khalid, 2021, p. 73)
[1147] (Ayupova, 1998, p. 51)
[1148] (Khalid, 2021, p. 75)
[1149] (Dunnell & Elliott, 2004, p. 210)
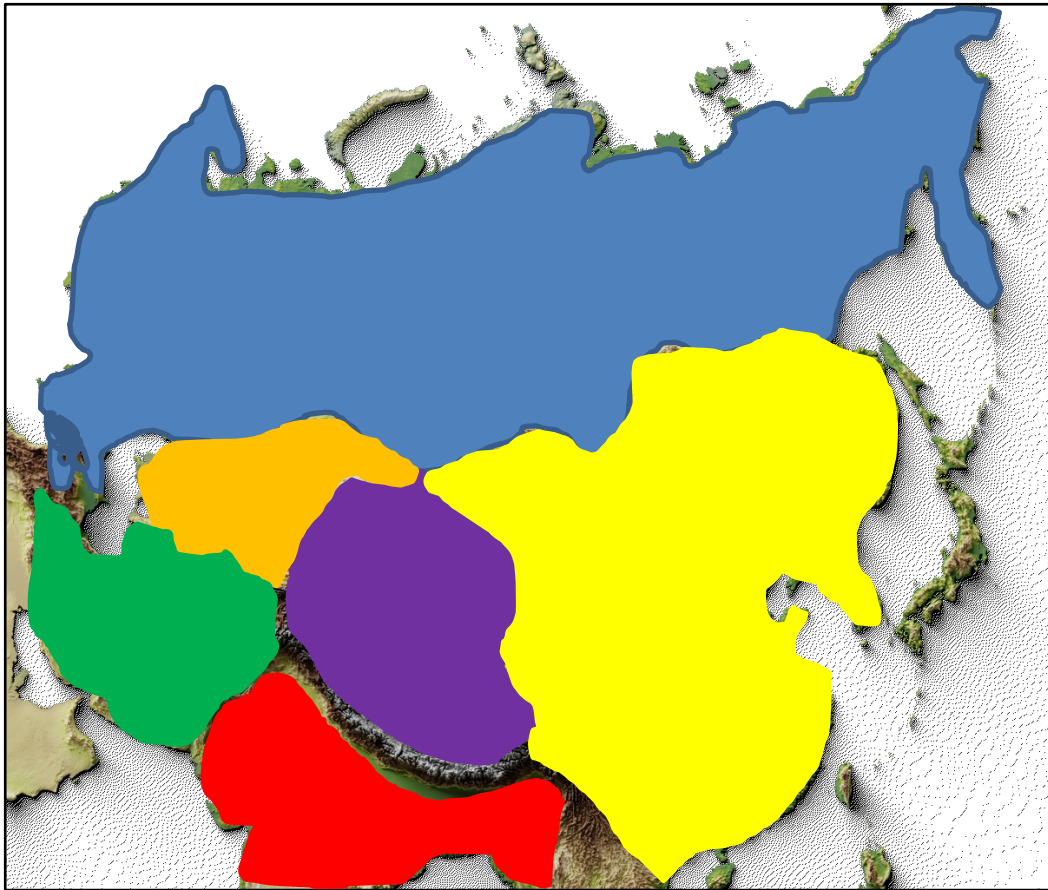[1150] (LeDonne, 2004, p. 111)

Figure 17 – The relative position of the Kazakh Khanate (Orange), Dzungar Khaganate (Purple) Russian Empire (blue), Qing Dynasty (Yellow), Indian Raj (Red), and Qajar Dynasty (Green) in the early 19th Century. Per (Khalid, 2021).

Drawn south by increasing trans-Steppe trade and the geopolitical threat posed by the British colonisation of India, St. Petersburg was quick to assert its *Khaganate* status vis-à-vis the *Khanates* of the Steppe.[1151] The closure of the Gates of Dzungaria by the Qing, and the consolidation of the Persia under the Qajar Dynasty, had brought an end to raiding on the Steppe – limiting a primary source of income to feed the *Steppe Cycle*.[1152]

By the time Russia began to expand south, the Kazakh Khanate had fragmented into three жүз (*Žuz* – "horde(s)) which maintained nominal loyalty to the Khan.[1153] Whilst Russian "protection" was extended southwards into the Steppe, it would be another two hundred years before Russian *civilisation* followed suite.[1154] Such was, in part, the result of a geopolitical realignment in the West. The Crimean War of 1853 had halted westward

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[1151] (Olcott, 1981, p. 57)
[1152] (Khalid, 2021, p. 30)
[1153] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 41)
[1154] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 38)

expansion and united Europe against St. Petersburg's ambitions in that direction.[1155]
Moreover, the losses in Crimea had exposed Russia's relative weakness compared to the
powers of continental Europe.[1156]

Such weaknesses had geographical origins. As highlighted in **Part 3.1**, Inner Eurasia sits
outside the watersheds of the Eurasian Continent, and receives comparatively low rainfall
compared to Outer Eurasia.[1157] The harsh environment of Siberia and the Eurasian Steppe
does not make the carrying on of large-scale agriculture, such as those seen in
Industrialising Europe, feasible.[1158] It was such factors that had led to the development of
the *Steppe Tradition* in the first place – and it was such geographical factors that had
played the largest role in preventing Russia from keeping pace with its western
counterparts.[1159]

Whilst others have pointed to the willingness of Russia's elite to cling to Serfdom as being
a disruptive factor in modernising the regime, such factors themselves have a geographical
logic.[1160] The only option that lay open to Russian policymakers was the exploitation of its
existing territories – the *Chernozem Belt* of the Steppe. Thus, between 1850 and 1895,
Russia gradually incorporated Central Asia into its core territories,[1161] establishing a
territorial domain that would remained mostly unchanged until the outbreak of the First
World War (1914-1918) and its aftermath (1918-1924).[1162]

[1155] (Figes, 2022, p. 400)
[1156] (Fuller, 1998, p. 273)
[1157] (Christian, 1988, p. 46)
[1158] "Estimated" is a key word here, as per (Guinnane, 2021) the data of Inner Eurasia are
unreliable due to the remoteness of the area studied.
[1159] (Moon, 2013, p. 139)
[1160] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 113)
[1161] (Khalid, 2021, p. 129); notably, the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara were maintained
as vassals.
[1162] Whilst Western Historiography tends to view the First World War (also known as the
Great War) as lasting from 1914 until 1918, there is an increasing number of scholars that
focus on the period lasting from 1914 until 1924 as being one major security event. This is
because whilst conflict between the major powers ended with the armistice of 11/11/1918,
several conflicts that had their origins in the First World War continued well into its
aftermath – with peace settlements often being deferred until a later date, even when they
involved major powers. Such conflicts include the Russian Civil War, and its various
independence wars (1917-1924), the wars in the former Habsburg domain (1918-1921), the
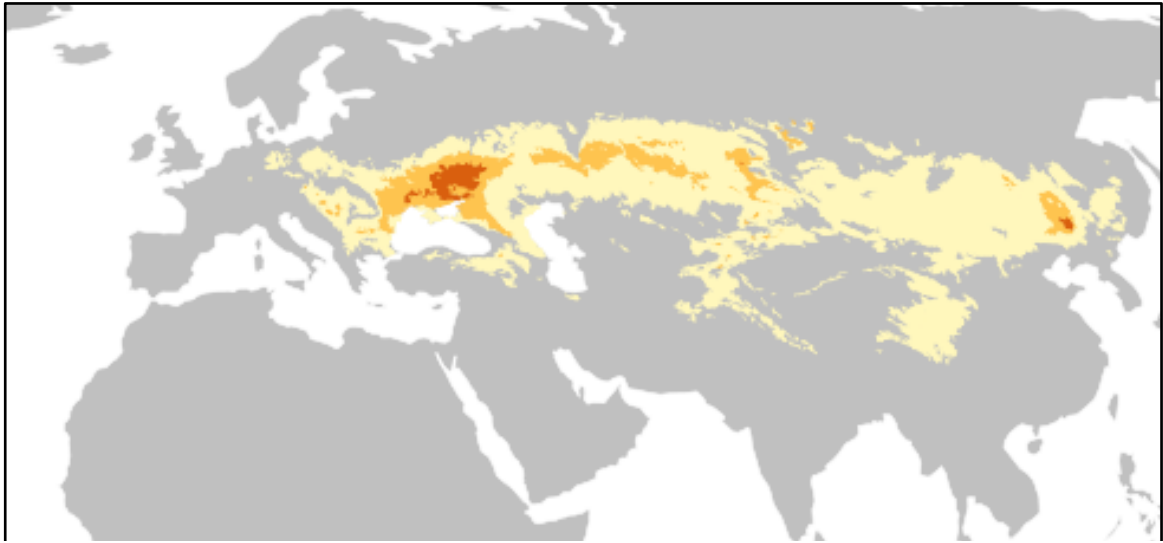Anglo-Irish War (1914-1921) and the Greco-Turkish and Franco-Turkish Wars (1918-

Figure 18 – a Map of Chernozem in Eurasia. Per (Clarholm & Bergström, 2012).

Centuries earlier, such a proposition would have been absurd. Wherein Steppe Empires had spread across the Steppe, they had usually been through the *Crisis-Driven* unification of many clans, and not merely the imposition of one clan over another.[1163] Russia was, however, a *Dual-Administration*. Like the Qing Dynasty, it possessed both the mobility and capacity of Steppe Empires, whilst also possessing the agricultural surplus and trade capabilities of Sedentary Empires.[1164] Armed with the agricultural surplus of the Ukrainian Steppe, and the coal and iron of the industrial sites in the Donbas, Russia leveraged its autocracy to pour resources into industrialization, laying down 70,000 kilometres of railway between 1860 and 1910.[1165] In reopening the Russian Heartland to the mobility of the Steppe, Russia emerged as a truly global empire.[1166] Rapid industrialisation transformed the Steppe itself, with Donetsk and Tashkent just two of many industrial pillars upholding the imperial yurt.[1167]

Russia's format as a *Dual-Administration Empire* had meant that the introduction of Russian power to the Steppe was brought about through local intermediaries, and thus

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1922). Together, the post-war conflicts would cost 4,000,000 lives. See (Gerwarth, 2016, p. 11).
[1163] (Favereau, 2021, p. 58)
[1164] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)
[1165] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 113)
[1166] (Christian, 1992, p. 587)
[1167] (Gubarev, 2015, p. 13)

found ready acceptance amongst the states in the region.[1168] Whilst St. Petersburg initially tried to keep Kazakhs beyond the formal boundaries of Russia, the inability of the Kazakh Khans to control the actions of the *Žuz* (who continued to raid Russian merchants and engage in diplomacy independent of the Tsar) led to a dramatic change in policy.[1169] In Bashkiria, the Russian leadership had re-learnt the importance of faith as a tool of coercion.[1170] As Russia conquered the Steppe, Russian leaders sought to "civilise" the Kazakhs through a campaign of Mosque construction.[1171] As discussed in **Part 3.6**, Islam itself had emerged as a *Hybrid Tradition*. The establishment of the first Islamic State can be seen as an attempt in harnessing the military wealth of Arabia's Bedouins through the imposition of town-based obligations.[1172] As Von Grunebaum writes;

> "Only in a city, that is, a settlement harboring a central mosque, jami' fit for the Friday service and a market (and preferably a public bath) [could] all the requirements of the faith be properly fulfilled. Migration into town, *hijra*, is recommended and almost equalized in merit to that more famous migration, again call *hijra*, of the Prophet."[1173]

The result of such policies was the gradual *sedentarization* and *urbanisation* of the Steppe. Yet the uniformity brought by Empire also settled many longstanding contentions. In dispatching loyal Bashir bureaucrats to the Steppe, Russia created a linguistic and cultural interface through which it could negotiate with its new subjects.[1174] As Bashkir Imams cultivated a religious following amongst the Kazakhs, they supplanted the *Khoja* class, further solidifying Russian rule.[1175] The introduction of new technologies such as the Telegram and Postal Service re-connected Muslims on the Steppe to the wider Islamic World.[1176] Consequently, for the first time since the Abbasid Caliphate, there existed a unity in Islamic Jurisprudence on the Steppe. Yet the Imperial authorities would not stop

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[1168] (Khalid, 2021, p. 75)
[1169] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 41)
[1170] (Steinwedel, 2016)
[1171] (Khalid, 2021, p. 121)
[1172] (Clarke, 2011, p. 13)
[1173] (Grunebaum, 1946, p. 173)
[1174] (Yemelianova, 2002, p. 69)
[1175] (Fisher, 1968, p. 542)
[1176] (Khalid, 2021, p. 122)

with merely spiritual unity, but also sought Cultural and Administrative Unity. As such, as the *Turkestan Krai* was created, and a programme of *Turkification* was carried out on the non-Turkic inhabitants of the steppe.[1177] Within a generation, the Chagatai language had re-acquired a prestige status that it had lacked since the time of the Timurids.[1178]

Yet such policies also inadvertently resulted in a partial *Russification* of the Steppe, as Russian emerged as naturally the natural lingua franca of the urban elite.[1179] Furthermore, as with the contemporaneous conquest of the American West, the expansion of the Russian colonial footprint in Central Asia highlighted the differences between the conquerors and the conquered.[1180] Within towns, Russian law and legal customs was applied – with or without the State backing.[1181] This, combined with the increasing contact between peoples "divided by a cultural and social gulf" brought home to Central Asians their position as a subjugated people.[1182]

Traditional systems of law on the Steppe, such as the بارانتا (*Baranta* – "what is owed"), a system of retaliatory livestock rustling, were criminalised.[1183] In other matters, however, particularly with regard to property rights, the system remained consistent with the *Suyurqal*.[1184] For the centralising Tsars of the late Romanov period, the existence of a non-liberal Steppe Tradition in the borderlands provided for a policy of pursuing an *institutional median* that was accepted both "at home" and "abroad".[1185] As such, the Russian conquest of the Steppe was not so much a *transplantation* of Russian institutions, but rather the *absorbtion* of Steppe intuitions into the rapidly *Hybridizing* state.

Nonetheless, authorities in St. Petersburg knew that the rapid drive towards an Imperial standard would be rejected by interest groups who had benefited off the pre-modern status quo. Russian authorities thus sought to maintain the *Dual-Administration* structure of the

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[1177] (Nourzhanov & Bleuer, 2013, p. 22)
[1178] (Pillalamarri, 2016)
[1179] (Akiyama, 2015, p. 627)
[1180] (Khalid, 2021, p. 166)
[1181] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 45)
[1182] (Brower, 1996, p. 41)
[1183] (McDaniel, 2017, p. 210)
[1184] (Kassymova, et al., 2012, p. 198)
[1185] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 49)

Empire to the greatest extent possible by preventing further immigration of Russian settlers into the Steppe.[1186] In another parallel to the experiences of Colonial and Post-colonial North America,[1187] such efforts often fell flat on the vast expanse of the Steppe, leading officials to conclude that it was "impossible to stop Russian Settlement" – with 16,000 illegal settlers arriving in 1903 alone.[1188]

Inter-ethnic tensions only increased with Russia's adoption of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality" and its position as the "Father of the Slavs".[1189] For officials in St. Petersburg, such an ideological framework was necessary in order to expand Russia's presence in the Balkans and Central Europe.[1190] Yet in once again adopting a Euro-centric posture, Russian officials had unwittingly intensified the Darwinist struggle occurring in Central Asia. According to one Russian State Journal of the time, "Why are the [Kazakhs] here?" was a common refrain, often followed with "the land is the tsar's and we [Slavs] are the tsar's people".[1191] Such sentiments were shared amongst the lower bureaucracy, and officials were often willing to look the other way as tens of thousands of "New Settlers" poured into the region.[1192]

Such "New Settlers" were emblematic of an emerging class conflict on the Steppe. Unlike the pre-1870 Cossack Elite, the New Settlers were urban, poor, and distinctly *Russian* – viewing Central Asia and its customs as comparatively backwards.[1193] The product of Russia's late-stage "flirtation with Capitalism" in the *Stolypin Reforms*, they viewed the existing *Dynastic* status quo as abhorrently cosmopolitan, even whilst they pledged loyalty to the *Father of the Russian Nation* in the Tsar.[1194] As such, they stood bitterly opposed to and by the Traditional Cossack Elite, whose Steppe system of land administration was based on a kind of communalism that shirked the Stolypin Reforms to the bitter end.[1195]

[1186] (Akiyama, 2015, p. 625)
[1187] See, for example, the Anglo-Indian Proclamation Line of 1763. (Mount Vernon Digital Library, 2012).
[1188] (Brower, 1996, p. 46)
[1189] (Thaden, 1954, p. 500)
[1190] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 41)
[1191] (Brower, 1996, p. 48)
[1192] (Khalid, 2021, p. 167)
[1193] (Chokobaeva, et al., 2020, p. 234)
[1194] (Ascher, 1994, p. 112)
[1195] (O'Rourke, 2000, p. 80)

To use the Haitain Revolution as a comparative model, the "New Settlers" stood as the *Petits Blancs*, the coming force of social change on the Steppe.[1196] Through converting the Steppe into an agrarian society, the Russian settlers undermined the traditional rule of both the Cossack Elite and the Kazakh commoners. In the words of one schlolar, their colonisation was an act of poverty redistribution "from the czar's restive peasant subjects to his defeated nomadic subjects [and the Cossack Elite]".[1197] By the First World War, their number would peak at almost three million.[1198]

These tensions also existed in Russia proper. By the early 20th Century, St. Petersburg wished to transform Russia into a *Modern, National Empire* for the *Nation of the Slavs*.[1199] Yet the French Revolution of 1789 and the European Revolution of 1848 had demonstrated the middle-class origins of both *Nationalism* and *Modernity*.[1200] Such phenomena coincide with the middle-class tendency to be politically active, a factor that can often result in pushes for political reform.[1201] St. Petersburg wanted a modern nation*,* but was unwilling to make the necessary political and economic changes to facilitate *modernisation*.[1202] As such, authorities in St. Petersburg were content to proceed with the material technologies of modernity, whilst disposing of the social technologies that had emerged alongside them.

Such results manifested in unpredictable ways. As stated previously, the first time in the history of the Steppe, the outside world was "close". Debates between Islamic authorities in Crimea and Samarkand could be conducted over telegram, and the victories of Islamic battalions against Russia's enemies could be advertised in the Tsarist Press.[1203] Yet this influx of new ideas was not always controlled, nor to the benefit of the authorities in St. Petersburg. Alongside the threat of Islamic Revivalist discourse from British India,[1204] Tsarist Authorities also had to content with the influx of modern ideas of *Nationhood* that

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[1196] (James, 2001, p. 70)
[1197] (Barisitz, 2017, p. 225)
[1198] (Hartwell, 2023)
[1199] (Ablonczy, 2022, p. 68)
[1200] (Greenfeld, 1992, p. 245)
[1201] (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006, p. 256)
[1202] (Pipes, 1974, p. 305)
[1203] (Khalid, 2021, p. 260)
[1204] (Metcalf, 2014, p. 44)

challenged the traditional view of the Steppe as being ethnically heterogenous and kinship-orientated.[1205] The origin of such ideas was, itself, a by-product of the Steppe Tradition – the Kingdom of Hungary.

Having been reconstituted following the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Hungary looked to justify its existence on the world stage. An ethnic anomaly in Europe, the Hungarians found very little solidarity amongst the Pan-Slavist and Pan-Germanic movements of the day.[1206] The consequence was a frustrated intellectual class that looked East for inspiration, identifying with the broad tapestry of "Altaic" peoples that inhabited the Eurasian Steppe.[1207] Budapest thus equipped the Turks of Central Asia with a language by which they could express the injustices of colonization.[1208] The consequences of such was the emergence of a Central Asian literati, the *Jadids* ("New Ones") that looked not to Moscow, but to Budapest and Constantinople for inspiration.[1209] The *Turanic Past*, with its heterogenous Steppe Empires and communal economics, was seen as infinitely preferable present status quo of capitalist exploitation and rising Russian chauvinism.[1210]

That said, whilst the Jadids rejected the capitalism and Russian imperialism, they did not reject *sedentarization* or the technologies of modernity.[1211] Thus, much like the *Black Jacobins* in the terminology of the Haitian Revolution, the Jadids found themselves to be willing collaborators with the Socialist undercurrent of the anti-Tsarist movement.[1212] That said, in being modernists, the Jadids were inherently opposed to the Босмачи (*Bāsmachi*) – a catchall term meaning "bandits" that was used to refer to the traditionalist undercurrent in Central Asian anti-colonialism.[1213] Having their origins in the pre-colonial aristocratic classes, the *Bāsmachi* consolidated not around modernity or concepts of nationhood, but rather, around Islam and the traditional order.[1214] As such, due to the slow proliferation of

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[1205] (Roshwald, 2013, p. 232)
[1206] (Snyder, 1984, p. 118)
[1207] (Landau, 1995, p. 63)
[1208] (Landau, 1995, p. 63)
[1209] (Ersoy, Gorny, & Kechriotis, 2010, p. 110)
[1210] (Purton, 2022, p. 11)
[1211] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 59)
[1212] (James, 2001, p. 70)
[1213] (Khalid, 2021, p. 231)
[1214] (Olcott, 1981, p. 352)

Islam amongst the Nomads, the *Bāsmachi* movement had a stronger basis in *sedentary* Central Asia than on the Steppe.[1215] They stood opposed to the Jadids and Russians alike.

In attempting to build a Russian Ethno-state on the Eurasian Steppe, St. Petersburg had tied itself into a Gordian Knot. The sword that cut it was Russia's Slavophile preoccupation in the Balkans. Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the ailing Habsburg administration sought to reclaim some of its former prestige.[1216] Having been forced out of Italy and Germany, the Dual-Monarchy turned to the Balkans. There, an ailing Ottoman Empire gave way to Great Power Competition, as Russian Slavophiles competed with Austrian Imperialists and Neo-Ottoman Nationalists.[1217] The competition between Russian Pan-Slavism and an aggrieved Austro-Hungarian Empire ultimately resulted in the First World War.[1218] The Great War would change the Steppe and the Empire that inhabited it, forming, in a Crucible of Modern War, a new kind of Steppe Empire.

[1215] (Lorenz, 1994, p. 280); note that the Basmachi, beyond the elite were also largely rural.
[1216] (Lesaffer, 2021)
[1217] (Roider & Wagnleitner, 2023)
[1218] (Clark, 2013, p. 85)

4.7 The Crucible of War

Nobody was ready for Modern War. By June 1916, the Russian Empire was suffering a manpower shortage, and conscription was extended to include the hitherto Central Asian population.[1219] In doing so, St. Petersburg tore down the last vestiges of the *Dual-Administration*. Central Asians suddenly found themselves subjected in full to the harsh realities of a foreign and intrusive colonial system.[1220] At the same time, the aggrieved ethnic Russian population revolted against an Imperial System that had long prioritised the needs of its colonial subjects over its titular population.[1221] The consequence was the violent disintegration of the Russian Empire in Central Asia – a disaster that cost the lives of close to 300,000 imperial subjects and, ultimately, forced the reconstitution of the Russian Imperium.[1222] The Russian Imperium had *rotted from the Steppe*, and not from the last time.

By the February Revolution in 1917, the had Steppe disintegrated into competing *Khanates*. These consisted of the сотня (*sotnya* – "hundred") of the elite Cossack rurality, the Red/White armies of the urban bourgeoisie and proletariat, and the *Imanov Khanate* – a "pure" steppe polity ruling over a *horde* of 50,000 Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Dungans and other dispossessed Central Asian.[1223] Amongst the sedentary Muslims of the Furghana Valley and Transoxiana, there was initially a degree of unity, as the Central Asian Revolt carried over into a general ethnic conflict between Russian settlers and the "natives".[1224] Much as in the case of the Haitian Revolution, however, the *Petits Blancs* and *Jacobins de Coleur* found common ground in opposing the *Grands Blancs* and *Grands de Coleur*.[1225] As such, following the October Revolution, the embattled Jadids became willing collaborators with the Bolsheviks in bringing Communism to Central Asia.[1226] In doing so, they outnumbered the other factions that continued to battle each other on the Steppe.

[1219] (Sokol, 2016, p. 82)
[1220] (Chokobaeva, et al., 2020, p. 24)
[1221] (Horne, 2011)
[1222] (Morrison, 2020, p. 539)
[1223] (Khalid, 2021, p. 233)
[1224] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 61)
[1225] (James, 2001, p. 70)
[1226] (Khalid, 2021, p. 234)

As the war expanded across Russia, its fighting took on a strangely traditional character. The Eurasian Nomads of old were replaced in modernity by cavalry and the mobility provided by the armoured train.[1227] Even more peculiar, however, was the rapid abandonment of *Europeanization* by the Russian Elite, and the firm retrenchment of Russian Politics in the *Steppe Tradition*. For an empire that had built itself on a western-looking model of modernisation, this was a significant change. As David Christian writes; "At the top of the system, hardly anyone survived."[1228]

The extermination of Russia's political elite, however, merely demonstrates the greater importance of geopolitical conditions and institutional inertia, rather than leaders, in creating new institutions.[1229] Such was complemented by the new leadership's need for an existing bureaucracy and army, which brought with it the presumptions of the previous regime.[1230] The Revolution thus destroyed the "central rivet", but the soon found itself relying on "holdovers" from the old regime.[1231] The system of rule that sprung fourth from the revolutionary turmoil was, ultimately, grounded in the same realities that had forged and re-forged the system since the Xiong-nu first burst fourth through the Gates of the People.[1232] As in 1598, the collapse of the old regime led to a brief proliferation of experimental governance, but never an overall departure from the old system.[1233]

As such, the Provisional Government that emerged in 1917 was forced to quickly adopt a more autocratic posture. For the Russian Democrats of the February Revolution, such circumstances carried with them a bitter irony. As the *liberal* Minster of Trade and Industry, Aleksandr Konovalov, noted in 1917;

> "[if the] Deputies do not manage to control the movement and to guide it into [industry], then scores and hundreds of enterprises will close down… bringing with it everywhere death [and] devestation".[1234]

[1227] (Beevor, 2022, p. 424)
[1228] (Christian, 1988, p. 719)
[1229] (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 36)
[1230] (Lewin, 1985, p. 185)
[1231] (Rowney, 2005, p. 97)
[1232] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 33)
[1233] (Christian, 1988, p. 351)
[1234] (McCauley, 1980, p. 67)

Yet another contradiction – that between freedom and security – was added to the failing Empire. By late 1917 it had become clear that the only means of saving the state was the readoption of the pillars of *Steppe Tradition*. To that end, both the *Whites* and the *Reds* offered solutions that could have seen their faction emerge victorious.[1235] The fact that the *Whites* opposed the *Reds* does not mean they were, by default, liberal or democratic. On the contrary, whilst the *Whites* held a diverse set of ideological precepts, the core of their beliefs was still based on the "Fatherly Rule" of a "United, Multinational Russian People" who "possessed unique and valuable qualities which distinguished them from Westerners and Western institutions in Russia inappropriate.".[1236]

This insistence on cultural uniqueness forms a strong undercurrent of Russian philosophy, and is often referred to as "Russian Lawlessness".[1237] This phenomenon is best understood in the words of Nikolai Gogol, who wrote in 1848 that through the "Tatar enslavement", Russians had become "bound in a blood relationship with the tsar", and thus had been kept in a state of *Innocence* – avoiding the *rationalism* that drew the West away from God.[1238] As such, in the words of Paul Robinson in *Russian Conservatism*;

> "Russia acquired a mission—namely, to preserve the truth that had been adulterated in the West, and eventually to persuade the West to see the error of its ways and to adopt the one true faith".[1239]

In this divine mission, it was the East – and not the West – that was Russia's natural ally. After all, it was Alexander Nevsky's alliance with the Tatars against the Teutonic Knights that had saved "true Christendom" from the heresies of the West – a "cultural meme"[1240] readily employed by even the most ardent *Bolsheviki*.[1241] Such themes are further

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[1235] (Christian, 1988, p. 746)
[1236] (Kenez, 1980, p. 77)
[1237] (Snyder, 2018)
[1238] (Gogol, 1993, p. 69)
[1239] (Robinson, 2019, p. 18)
[1240] Per (Dawkins, 1989, p. 192); *Meme* is defined as being "a unit of [cultural] imitation", akin to a gene in biology.
[1241] (Overy, 2005, p. 558)

expanded upon by Ivan Ilyin, "Putin's [so-called] favourite philosopher".[1242] Born to an aristocratic Russo-German lineage, Ilyin emigrated from the Revolutionary turmoil of Russia's 1920s, ultimately emerging as the "official ideologue of the White movement".[1243] Born between two worlds, Ilyin nonetheless stressed the *uniqueness* of Russian civilisation, emphasising its ties to an older, uncorrupted world.[1244]

Whilst western thinkers are quick to label any kind of Conservative Authoritarianism as being "Fascist", such a wide use of the *epithet* obscures the immense diversity that exists within anti-liberal movements.[1245] Something that is lost in such analyses is that Fascism is inherently *modernist*, and explicitly so. In Mussolini's own words "The Fascist negation of socialism, democracy, liberalism, should not, however, be interpreted as implying a desire to drive the world backwards to positions occupied prior to 1789".[1246] Fascisms roots thus lie not in the pre-Revolutionary aristocratic status quo, but in the *Generation of 1793* – the Jacobins – a pedigree it shares with Socialist movements of the 20th Century.[1247] Where the ideologies differ, however, is in the post-Maxist insistence on *internationalism* – "the working men have no country".[1248] Thus whilst both ideologies emerge (alongside liberalism) out of the *Modernist "trideology"* of *Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité* – Socialism emphasises the second factor and chooses the trans-national working-class as its object of mobilisation, whereas Fascism emphasises the third factor, seeing instead the trans-class *Nation* as adequate.[1249]

Such modernist pretentions did not find fertile ground in the thought of Russian Traditionalists such as Ilyn, who clung to a pre-modern order.[1250] Yet Ilyn's writings were nonetheless heavily influential on the burgeoning school of Russian Eurasianists, who found the *Innocence* of Russians to modernity as a point by which the Empire could be

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[1242] (Mirovalev, 2022)
[1243] (Robinson, 2019, p. 135)
[1244] (Ilyin, 1926)
[1245] Per (Orwell, 1944): "the word 'Fascism' is almost entirely meaningless…almost any English person would accept 'bully' as a synonym for 'Fascist'. That is about as near to a definition as this much-abused word has come."
[1246] (Mussolini, 1932, p. 7)
[1247] (Camus & Lebourg, 2017, p. 20)
[1248] (Marx & Engles, 1978, p. 488)
[1249] (Nora, 1997, p. 415)
[1250] (Robinson, 2019, p. 18)

justified.[1251] Rather than a *Nation* or an *Empire,* with all the oppressive aspects of modernity that such terms carried, the Russian realm was merely a "harmonious, symphonic, organic association of peoples which constituted a higher historical and cultural unity".[1252]

For Eurasianists such as Nikolai Trubetskoy, liberalism had its roots in European heresy, and was at odds with the functioning of the rest of humanity.[1253] Here, the *Steppe Tradition* also is observable, as Trubetskoy conceded that Inner Eurasia's unique geography led to the development of a unique emphasis on community and commonality over individuality difference.[1254] These are manifest in Dostoevsky's *Russian God* and the related concept of собо́рность (*Sobornost'* – "commun") – an explicit rejection of the *Aristotelian Individualism* that shaped Western Christianity and Civilisation, along with an emphasis on the "State of Truth" evident in submission to *the Idea*.[1255]

It is in this latter *Ideocratic* construction that Conservative Eurasianists such as Lev Karasvin found common ground with Bolsheviks, after all "a Bolshevik is a Russian maximalist, and a communist is a Westerner and an atheist".[1256] For Left-Eurasianists, Russia's failure was in its *Petrine* and *Post-Petrine* "[building] up [of] political structures that were not [Eurasian], and had no roots among [Eurasian] people".[1257] From this starting point, Left-Eurasianists saw the destruction of the Tsarist Regime as being a means by which the clock could be turned back to more "organic" forms of politics grounded in what is now refered to as the *Steppe Tradition*.[1258] Such politics was found in the Steppe, where "ethnic Russians and the Steppe peoples, such as the Mongols, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz, are bound together through long-standing complementarities".[1259]

[1251] (Laurelle, 2008, p. 3)
[1252] (Robinson, 2019, p. 45)
[1253] (Smirnov, 2019)
[1254] (Barros, 2019)
[1255] Per (Ierodiakonou, 2012, p. 100); "Everyone is born with different inclinations" he points out and advises that we should look "towards which we tend".
[1256] (Smirnov, 2019)
[1257] (Robinson, 2019, p. 147)
[1258] (Smirnov, 2019)
[1259] (Robinson, 2019, p. 171)

Thus, just as Maoism can be viewed as the adaptation of Marxism to the Chinese context, so too should Leninism be viewed as its adaptation to Russia and its synthesis with the *Steppe Tradition*.[1260] Thus, despite the ideological diversity within expressions of Russian politics, the potency of its geopolitical condition mean that all such expressions carried the same presuppositions.[1261] The consequence of this is that the Bolsheviks unwittingly became the champions of a deeply traditional Russian order that viewed "Bolshevism [as] a personification of some elemental aspirations of the Russian nation", and thus infinitely preferable to western individualism.[1262] That same order held nothing but disdain for the *Liberal* and *Nationalist* Russians who had emerged in the wake of the French Revolution.[1263] It was in this scorning of the "Great Russian Chauvinism" where the Bolsheviks, Traditionalists and Eurasianists likewise found common ground.[1264] The *Russian Innocence* would be preserved, but at what cost.

Beholden to such institutional inertia, it should be unsurprising that the regime that emerged from the Civil War – the early Bolshevik State – was a *Steppe Polity* of the *Direct Taxation* type.[1265] It goes without saying that the ideal of *Democratic Centralism* was not unique to the Bolsheviks – such having been pioneered by French Revolutionary François-Noël "Gracchus" Babeuf in 1796.[1266] Yet the form that the Vanguard State took under the Bolsheviks resembled the previous Tsarist and Golden Horde structures.[1267] The Bolsheviks may have been informed by their own doctrine of social revolution, but the tool they ultilised was "the same centrist system of political and fiscal management that the Old Regime had used" – even if that structure had been heavily influence by *Europeanization* and no longer represented a "pure" Steppe polity.[1268]

What the Bolshevik Revolution did impact, however, was the speed of modernization occurring in the Russian Lands. The 18th Century reformism, which had come to a

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[1260] (Gregor, 1999, p. 117)
[1261] (Robinson, 2019, p. 18)
[1262] Per Lev Karsavin, in (Paradowski, 2007, p. 95).
[1263] (Baumann, 2019, p. 21)
[1264] (Chulos & Piirainen, 2000, p. 79)
[1265] (Christian, 1992, p. 173)
[1266] (Birchall, 1997, p. 116)
[1267] (Mawdsley, 2011, p. 235)
[1268] (Rowney, 2005, p. 92)

screeching halt following the Bashkir Wars, had given way to a project of counter-reform that looked not to Europe but to the Tsardom of Ivan and its Tatar Institutions.[1269] Conseqeuently, whilst Russia modernsied throughout the 19th Century, it did so in a way that saw the "relentless penetration [of Russian Authority] into the economic and of the "undergoverned" territories of the Empire".[1270] The Tsars of the later reform period merely sought to expand direct rule beyond Kazan and into the regions wherein the Imperial Core was responsible for "for few services apart from maintaining the ruling elite, military defence, and diplomacy".[1271]

The consequence of the Bolshevik Revolution was thus a *speed-run* of the Tsarist Reform process towards the establishment of a "Mobilizational State" on the Eurasian Steppe.[1272] The rapid growth of the Bolshevik bureaucracy – which had swelled to almost 5.4 million citizens by 1920 – necessitated that the industrialised lands of the west be re-incorporated into the Empire.[1273] Such was recognised as early as 1918, with Lenin conceding that "without world revolution a socialist project in Russia would collapse".[1274] Thus, Russia once again found itself locked in the *Steppe Cycle*. To that end, the Bolsheviks found themselves in possession of a "strong core" which "housed the empire's urban and industrial base, possessed impressive armed forces, elites, and resources".[1275]

The continuity of core-orientated infrastructure such as rail and electrical networks, combined with the survival of "administrative and public presuppositions about the nature of the state" provided for rapid *reimperialization* of the old empire.[1276] Nonetheless, *reimperialization* was hampered in two directs – Europe and the Caucasus. In both cases the existence of alternative "protopolitical institutions" wielded by a class of "political, cultural, and social elites" brought *reimperialization* to a halt.[1277] Such is worth exploring, as it is the outcome of the *sedentary traditions* of those lands.

[1269] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 246)
[1270] (Rowney, 2005, p. 94)
[1271] (Starr, 2015, p. 54)
[1272] (Remington, 2009, p. 22)
[1273] (Figes, 2014, p. 152)
[1274] (van Ree, 2002, p. 44)
[1275] (Motyl, 2001, p. 93)
[1276] (Rowney, 2005, p. 103)
[1277] (Motyl, 2001, p. 86)

4.9a War for the Intermarium and the Rebirth of Nations

With Russia in convulsion, the *Western* territories of the former Tsarist Empire sought to break away. Having come under Austro-German occupation in the latter half of 1917 as a result of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the string of newly independent Nation States extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea had time to prepare militarily for the comng regional war.[1278] Yet they also had time to prepare ideologically, a necessity not immediately obvious to the casual observer. All nations had been part of the pre-modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and shared in *the Rzeczpospolita* a common political ethos and culture.[1279]

Figure 19 – The lands of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (grey) and the former Commonwealth. (Beevor, 2022).

Yet they had also shared a common geographical space. As in the case of all imperial breakdowns, the result was a state of genocidal chaos – with the newly independent states engaged in fights for survival not merely with each other, but with their former Imperial

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[1278] (Beevor, 2022, p. 484)
[1279] (Janowski, 2001, p. 12)

overlords.[1280] More importantly for the purposes of state-building, the *War in the East* (1918-1923) saw a clash of institutions, as nationalists from each of the three failing Empires filled the senates of newly independent nation states.[1281]

As established in **Part 4.3**, the Commonwealth, as a pre-modern and *Feudal* polity, was no beacon of *liberalism* in the modern understanding of the term.[1282] Yet whilst the Commonwealth was dominated by a powerful class of nobles, the system of nobility itself was "relatively open to outsiders".[1283] The *Szlachta* class, formed from such policies, was composed of Polish Roman Catholics, German Jews, Ruthenian Orthodox Christians, Scottish Protestants and Tatar Muslims – all of whom contributed to a social contract that emphasised Rule of Law and a sense of Civicism.[1284] Such Civicism outlived the partitions of the Commonwealth by the Prussian, Russian and Austrian Empires in the 18th Century – an event contemporaneous to the French Revolution.[1285] Consequently, the arrival of *modernity* to the ex-subjects of the Commonwealth resulted in some anomalies, with the Russian-born Jewish-Belarusian poet, Adam Mickiewicz, famously declaring in Paris in 1834, "Lithuania! My fatherland!" – and doing so in the Polish Language.[1286]

Mickiewicz's declaration, however ironic to the modern observer, demonstrates the problem with nation-building, let alone state-building, in the *Post-Commonwealth Nations*. The consequence of the Commonwealth being "an [early modern] Republic of Nobles" is that it never reached the same degree of national mobilisation achieved by post-1789 Nationalist Movements.[1287] Yet it did still reach a significant enough level of mobilization that *Sarmatism* "spread widely among the Polish-Lithuanian population", creating a civic identity that transcended ethno-linguistic categories.[1288] As such line wherein "Lithuanian" or "Ruthenian" became "Polish" was much less defined after several centuries *in*

[1280] (Eidintas, et al., 1999, p. 86)
[1281] (Snyder, 2003, p. 111)
[1282] (Vernadsky, 1948, p. 6)
[1283] (Hellie, 1988, p. 168)
[1284] (Stone, 2001, p. 13)
[1285] (Duncan, 2014, p. 119)
[1286] (Snyder, 2003, p. 15)
[1287] (Fedorowicz, et al., 1982, p. 392)
[1288] (Stone, 2001, p. 213)

commun.[1289] The obvious solution would have been to revive the Commonwealth, and indeed many, including the Polish hero Józef Piłsudski, tried.[1290]

Over a century of foreign domination, however, had rendered the *Civic Nationalism* of the Commonwealth moot. Having been relegated to ethnic minorities within the lands of their conquerors, the ex-Citizens of the commonwealth instead mobilised around the more cogent factors of identity, such as ethnicity and language.[1291] Consequently, in all cases of *Post-Commonwealth Nations*, the historiography of nation-building explicitly deemphasised the early-modern period, emphasising instead an awkward continuity with the medieval period.[1292]

Overnight, the Slavs of the Kievan Rus' were indisputably *Ukrainian*, and Mickiewicz was transformed into a *Lithuanian* national hero under the name Adomas Mickevičius.[1293] Also shown in Mickiewicz's declaration, however, is the increasingly *Occidental* nature of Eastern Europe's Nationalist movements. The Partitions of the Commonwealth, beginning in 1772 and ending in 1794, had seen approximately 55% of the pre-partition population and 38% of its land falling under the control of the Habsburg and Prussian monarchies, with the remainder falling into the Russian Imperium.[1294] The seven million ex-Commonwealth citizens were, in turn, joined by a steady stream of refugees fleeing Russian reprisals in the aftermath of the Kościuszko Uprising.[1295] Further uprisings in the Russian and German territories would lead to further migrations into other parts of Western Europe, with many Post-Commonwealth settling in the "comparatively freer" Vienna, wherein *Austrianism* was embraced even whilst national romantic epics were created.[1296]

[1289] (Stone, 2001, p. 108)
[1290] (Snyder, 2003, p. 118)
[1291] (Friedrich, 2006, p. 217)
[1292] (Snyder, 2003, p. 51)
[1293] (Krapauskas, 2007, p. 261)
[1294] (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 96)
[1295] (Stone, 2001, p. 68)
[1296] (Radziwił & Roszkowski, 2000, p. 112)

The experience of an exile in Vienna would, in large part, ground the emergent nationalist movements in a *western tradition* of politics. Thus, when such exiles again engaged with *nationalism*, it was in the vocabulary and with the institutions of their occupiers. They also viewed such occupying empires as vehicles for the (re-)establishment of a Nation State in service of their *ethnogenisized* Nation.[1297] The pre-existence of institutions made the re-establishment of institutions, or their invention *a posteriori*, possible when those empires eventually collapsed.[1298] More importantly, however, is the fact that such elites held a cohesive (if conflicting) *national tradition* tied to the land itself.[1299] The question thus became one of the *Haves* and *Have Nots* of the *Post-Imperium*.

Figure 20 – The Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the inflow of Refugees to Austria. Per (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001).

[1297] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 347)
[1298] (Motyl, 2001, p. 86)
[1299] (Máiz, 2001, p. 13)

As stated in Part 2.2, the emergence or adoption of a *Nationality* can be understood as a form of *Identity Negotiation*. In pursuit of such, the critical step is *differentiation* – the ability to recognise and "crystalize" the social differences manifest in an emergent identity.[1300] During the period of Romantic Nationalism, the *Nation* was exalted in terms of its "language, history and cultural character", with religion providing an additional point of reference.[1301] In each of the Post-Commonwealth territories, the Commonwealth period came to be anachronistically regarded as a period of foreign domination.[1302] Nation-building, in a very Romantic Sense, was therefore focused on a mythical pre-history and aspirational post-history.[1303] State-building, which came thereafter, was tied to a cohesive *territorial tradition*.[1304] The Nation States, which emerged from the Grand Empires of Europe in the post-war period, had both.

The Baltic and Caucasian States, who possessed a concrete *territorial tradition* since the before the time of their incorporation into Tsarist Rule, were able to consolidate such traditions even in the face of Soviet *Reimperialization*.[1305] The consequence of having a "home to return to" meant that, at the twilight of the Soviet Empire, it would be the Baltic and the Caucasian States that would lead the push for independence.[1306] The polar opposite of the experiences of the Baltics and Caucasus was Belarus and the Central Asian States.[1307] In both cases, neither a stable *territorial tradition* nor a cohesive *national identity* was able to be formed prior to the breakdown of the Russian Imperium.[1308]

The Central Asian case was a precise rendering of the Steppe Tradition, and has already been expanded on. As for the North Ruthenian Elites of the future Belarus, they were able to develop an ethnic identity, but it remained a *luxury belief*.[1309] Unlike in the case of Ukraine (discussed below), there was no major diaspora in the West, nor a pre-existing

[1300] (Hechter, 1988, p. 116)
[1301] (Leerssen, 2013, p. 25)
[1302] (Schnell, 2015, p. 11)
[1303] (Snyder, 2003, p. 46)
[1304] (Bogdandy, et al., 2005, p. 580)
[1305] (Snyder, 2003, p. 93)
[1306] (Schnell, 2015, p. 224)
[1307] (Motyl, 2001, p. 86)
[1308] (Snyder, 2003, p. 46)
[1309] (Ioffe, 2003, p. 1247)

cultural tradition that had elite acceptance.[1310] A third case is the Jews and Tatars of the Commonwealth, who also constituted a significant part of the demographic makeup. Whilst lacking a concrete *territorial tradition* on the Commonwealth Lands, form a *Sui Generis* category in that they engaged in extraterritorial nationalism with the goal of establishing a Nation-State elsewhere.[1311] The same can also be said of the Lipka Tatars, who, having long merged with the *Szlachta*, became a celebrated part of the Polish Nation; with famous Tatars such as Charles Bronson and Aleksander Sulkiewicz often denoted as simply "Polish".[1312]

For Poland and Ukraine, the question was more difficult. In Poland, the existence of *Sarmatism* and its impact on the *Szlachta* ruling class meant that by the end of its existence, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a Polish State.[1313] To be *Szlachta*, regardless of one's ethnic affiliation, was to be "Polish".[1314] Consequently, for Polish Federalists such as Józef Piłsudski, the liberation of Poland would mean the reemergence of the multi-ethnic Commonwealth combined with the expansion of *Szlachta* membership and its culture of *Polonization* to lower social strata.[1315] In such a view, Poland would be a "political nation floating above the multinational borderlands [of the former commonwealth]".[1316] Opposing such views were National Democrats such as Roman Dmowski, who sought to do away with the historical legacy of the Commonwealth and create in its place a homogenous ethnically Polish Nation State.[1317]

Piłsudski's dreams of *Intermarium* were shattered by the outcome of the Polish-Soviet War (1918-1921).[1318] Whilst the Polish had achieved victory over the Red Army at the *Miracle on the Vistula*, such a victory was pyric in that it settled the conflict prematurely. The Subsequent *Treaty of Riga* (1921) did much to prevent the further expansion of Bolshevik Power westwards, but so too did it prevent the reincorporation of Ukrainian or Belarusian

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[1310] (Savchenko, 2009, p. 71)
[1311] (Ioffe, 2003, p. 1247)
[1312] (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 111)
[1313] (Kresin, 2002, p. 2)
[1314] (Kaminski, 1983, p. 17)
[1315] (Struve, 2008, p. 75)
[1316] (Snyder, 2003, p. 58)
[1317] (Lukowski & Zawadzki, 2001, p. 173)
[1318] (Snyder, 2003, p. 68)

Lands into a renewed Commonwealth.[1319] The consequence of such failed ambitions was a Poland that was "too westerly to be a federation, but not westerly enough to remain a national state". [1320] The Polish State that resulted would be termed "pathological", "a farce" and "the monstrous bastard of the treaty of Versailles".[1321] Driven by the Social Darwinism of the National Democrats, it would find itself in border conflicts with all of its neighbours, and ultimately divided between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany two decades later in 1939.[1322] When Poland did emerge once more after World War 2, it did so partially as a continuation of Dmowski's National State, and partially as a result of Soviet Nation-building.[1323]

Such a civic-ethnic construction of Poland would have been alien to the Polish soldiers of 1918, who sought to revive the long-dead Commonwealth. In Lviv, the capital of Austrian Galicia, such ambitions came into conflict with a new national identity – the *Ukrainian*.[1324] With the incorporation of the former Rus' Lands into the Russian Empire in 1667, the inhabitants of the former Rus' lands had found themselves part of a larger system in which they were relegated to an "other".[1325] Much like the Austrians of the Third Reich, the experience of Russian rule led to a state of cognitive dissonance within the so-called *Little Russians*.[1326] On one hand, they were part of the Russian Empire, yet on the other hand, they possessed a history and "dialect" that was clearly distinct from the Great Russian or White Russian (Belarusian) standards.[1327] Similarly, like the *Criollos* of Latin America, administrative barring *Little Russians* from dynastic service was met with a desire to "prove that the whole Cossack [ruling class] was the equivalent of the Russian nobility" so as to effect placement in the Tsar's court.[1328] Thus, the historical irony emerges in that it was in pursuit of a placement within the Russian imperial system that *Little Russians* discovered their nationality.

[1319] (Sanford, 2002, p. 5)
[1320] (Snyder, 2003, p. 68)
[1321] (Wheatcroft, 2020)
[1322] (Ciencialla, 2011, p. 112)
[1323] (Snyder, 2003, p. 68)
[1324] (Shkandrij, 2001, p. 201)
[1325] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 196)
[1326] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 32); "*Malorossy*".
[1327] (Shkandrij, 2001, p. 203)
[1328] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 356)

The confluence of class and ethnic identifications led to a cognitive dissonance that placed the inhabitants of the Rus' lands within the tradition of the *Triune Russian Nation*, even whilst "[Little Russians] made a point, in particular, of challenging and undermining the idea of a unitary Rus nation".[1329] By the 1830s, such divergences were becoming more cohesive, with *Ukraine* as an ethnic identifier beginning to find use amongst the first *Ukrainian Nationalists*, such as Mykola Kostomarov and Taras Shevchenko.[1330] Whilst Kostomarov initially toed the line between Ukrainian independence and autonomy, Shevchenko's works, such as *The Caucasus* (1845), were nothing less of a literary revolt against the Tsarist Authorities.[1331] Such activities, which included outright calls for independence, precipitated a crackdown by Muscovite Authorities from the 1847 onwards.[1332]

Whilst Ukrainian Russians were stifled, the *Ruthenian* community of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was having a cultural renaissance.[1333] In line with the Austrian ideology of cultural autonomy, *Ruthenians* were given a cultural platform within the wider Imperial structure.[1334] As a result, leading figures of the Ukrainian National Revival cut their teeth in late 19th Century Vienna.[1335] The permissiveness of the Habsburgs was calculated: The Austrian annexation of Bukovina and Galicia had left the Polish *Szlachta* ruling over a mostly Ruthenian peasantry.[1336] By empowering the Ruthenians, the Austrian government hoped to keep the rebellious Poles in check.

"*Ruthenian*" is the key word here, as the distinct geopolitical and institutional environment in which the Austrian Ruthenians found themselves differed significantly from their ethnic brethren in Ukraine.[1337] Occidentalist in nature, the Ruthenians of Austria-Hungary rejected the "alien, threatening, [and] Turanian world" of Russian Ukraine, with its

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[1329] (Shkandrij, 2001, p. 7)
[1330] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 19)
[1331] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 223)
[1332] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 35)
[1333] (Himka, 1999, p. 6)
[1334] (Yekelchyk, 2004, p. 90)
[1335] See, for example, (Hormayr, 1807).
[1336] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 36)
[1337] (Wilson, 2015, p. 105)

Orthodoxy and Cossack histories, focusing instead on the European and Scandinavian Rus'
history.[1338] Within Carpathian Ruthenia, such anti-Occidentalism reached a fever pitch,
resulting in the emergence of the *Rusyns* as a separate ethnic group.[1339]

Despite the seemingly divergent paths of Ukraine-proper and Galicia (Red Ukraine),
connections remained between them. Mykhailo Hrushevsky – the father of the Ukrainian
National Revival and first elected head of the Independent Rada in 1917 – may have been
born in Russian-occupied Poland, but his outlook was shaped by the Austrian
Enlightenment and his politics, whilst radically left-wing, were far from the *Sobornost'*
that dominated the Bolsheviks.[1340] Hrushevsky would eventually return from Austria-
Hungary to head the Central Rada of the emerging Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) in
Spring 1917.[1341] Nonetheless, he never ceased his work to create Ukraine as part of Europe
and "anchor Ukraine in the west".[1342] This fact is not lost on the contemporary Russian
President, Vladimir Putin, who stated in *On the Historical Unity of Russians and
Ukrainians*:

> "Many centuries of fragmentation and living within different states naturally
> brought about regional language peculiarities, resulting in the emergence of
> dialects… [but] the idea of Ukrainian people as a nation separate from the Russians
> started to form and gain ground among the Polish elite and a part of the
> Malorussian intelligentsia… the Austro-Hungarian authorities had latched onto this
> narrative, using it as a counterbalance to the Polish national movement and pro-
> Muscovite sentiments in Galicia".[1343]

Yet what Putin's speech does not take into account is that precisely the same
transformation was occurring on the left bank of the Dnepr. The construction of the *Little
Russian* identity was a synthesis of loyalty to the Empire and identification with *the*

[1338] (Ablonczy, 2022, p. 27)
[1339] (Wilson, 2015, p. 114)
[1340] (Himka, 1999, p. 18)
[1341] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 353)
[1342] (Muhr, 2022)
[1343] (Putin, 2021)

Ukraine.[1344] In time, those who had identified themselves as *Little Russians* merged with the wider Russian Peasantry, or, in the case of Cossacks, became Russified and formed the basis of the Russian Cossackdom. Despite their identification with the *Triune Russian Nation*, they maintained traces of their origin on the Pontic Steppe. In the Kuban, for example, such was made manifest in the Kuban Cossack "dialect" of Russian, *балачка* (*Balačka*),[1345] which maintained "a variety of features, some of which are now associated more with standard Ukrainian".[1346] Whilst such elements of *non-Russianness* were recognised by Tsarist officials, they were cast as "authentic characteristics of the historical experience of the two main parts of Russian ethnos: Great and Little-Russians".[1347] The incorporation of the Ukrainian Cossacks, who "included many inorodtsy [non-slavs] from the Volga: Meshcheriaks, Cheremisses and others", was the cornerstone of a wider shift in imperial ideology that would equate Russianness with loyalty to the state, regardless of ethnic origin.[1348]

Such acceptance of Ukrainian Cossacks as the platonic form of Russianness shouldn't be surprising. Since the 16th Century Cossacks had served as the instrument of Russian colonization, expanding across the Steppe to the Pacific Coast with the tide of Russian Power.[1349] Whilst the impact of Imperial Russia's *forced relocations* eastward is often centred on the *Russification* of "Novorossiya" (Eastern Ukraine), the often-unspoken factor is the impact that such policies had on the Steppe.[1350] Over time would come to be dominated by Russian townships manned by Ukrainian peasants to the exclusion of native Siberians on a ratio of 1:2 – a trend that would intensify throughout the next two centuries.[1351]

[1344] (Kohut, 1986, p. 574)
[1345] (Minahan, 2000, p. 384)
[1346] (Moncada, 2016, p. 33)
[1347] (Malikov, 2011, p. 55)
[1348] (Malikov, 2011, p. 55): "Loyalty to the Russian state and readiness to sacrifice one's life for its glory was the feature that distinguished the Russians from the others."
[1349] (Nahaylo, 1999, p. 648)
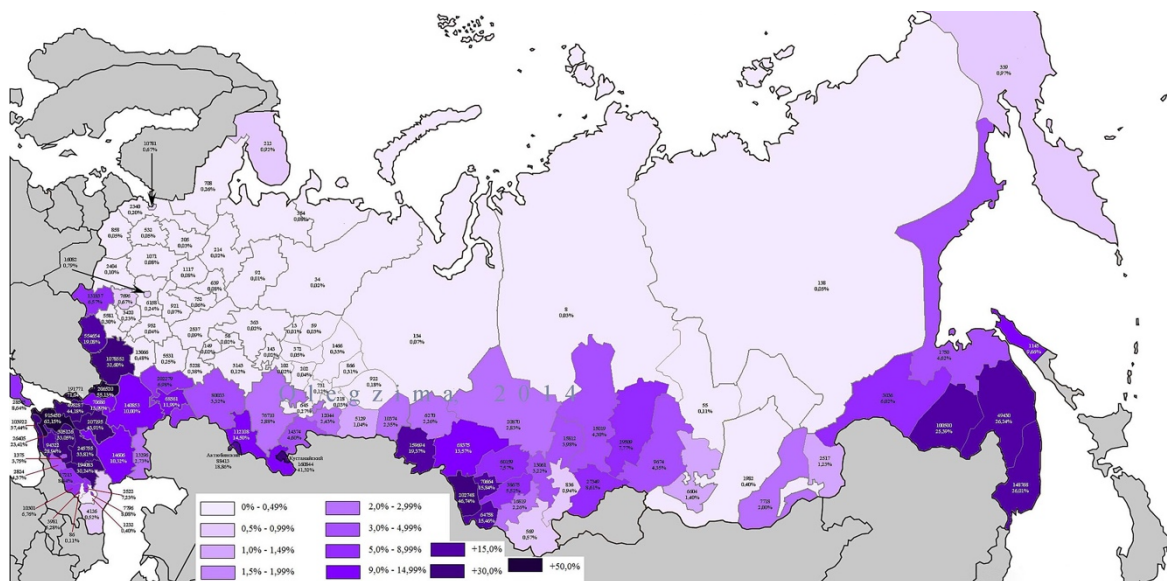[1350] (Serhiichuk, 2022)
[1351] (Serhiichuk, 2022)

Figure 21 - Number and share of Ukrainians in the population of the regions of the RSFSR in 1926. Per (Zima, 2014).

Alone and in a foreign land, the Kremlin's presumption was that the "Loyal Othodox Slavs" would band together.[1352] On the whole, this presumption proved correct – at least for the early period of the Empire, when the mandate was one of *Crusader Orthodoxy* or *Imperial Dynasticism*.[1353] As Andrew Wilson notes:

> "Those leaving were not yet Ukrainians, however, but first [and foremost] Orthodox peasants… as much East Slavic as they were Ukrainian. Those who left Ukraine brought with them dialect and folk memory, but they lacked the resources to create truly national communities".[1354]

With the advent of *Nationalism*, however, the question of identity on the Steppe became more complex. Ukrainian nationalists of the 19th Century found themselves suddenly confronted with an inability to ground the Ukrainian nation in a *territorial tradition*.[1355] Whilst all Ukrainian activists recognised a tradition that began with the territorial core of the Kievan Rus', few were willing to abandon their brethren, who by now formed an ethnic continuity stretching from the Carpathian Mountains to the Pacific Coastline.[1356] Likewise,

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[1352] (Nachayeva, et al., 2016, p. 3)
[1353] (Frost, 2014, p. 180)
[1354] (Wilson, 2015, p. 117)
[1355] (Cauthen, 2007, p. 301)
[1356] (Yekelchyk, 2007, p. 72)

those Ukrainians in Galicia and the Eurasian Steppe came to identify with the emergent Ukrainian ethnic identity, even whilst they maintained a separate territorial tradition.[1357] The result was the emergence of proto-nationalist "Ukrainian Culture Societies" in all major urban centres across the Steppe.[1358]

Thus, upon the breakdown of the Russian Empire, a series of locally "coloured" Ukrainian nationalist movements sprouted fourth across the Steppe. Such included "Red Ukraine" in Galicia-Volhynia, "Raspberry/Pink Ukraine" in the Kuban, "Yellow Ukraine" in the Volga River Basin, "Grey Ukraine" in Southern Siberia, and "Green Ukraine" in the far east.[1359] Remarkably, such a turn of events was predicted by German Romanticist Johann Gottfried von Herder, who, upon returning from a tour of the Russian Empire in 1769 declared that: "Ukraine will become one day a new Greece… There will rise a great and cultured nation whose boundaries will extend to the Black Sea and thence into the far-flung world".[1360]

Figure 22 – the "Other Ukraines". Per (Wilson, 2015).

Yet however great and cultured the emerging *Ukrainian Nation* was, it lacked the institutional and territorial cohesion necessary to survive the Russian Civil War intact. Within Ukraine proper, the February Revolution in 1917 prompted the creation of a *Central Rada* in Kyiv, which declared autonomy by June of that year.[1361] Elsewhere in the Steppe, the response was more severe; the Cossacks held that per *Steppe Tradition*, they were loyal to the Tsar, not the Great Russian Nation.[1362] As in the case of the Soviet Coup

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[1357] (Andrusiak, 2011)
[1358] (Smele, 2015, p. 476)
[1359] (Wilson, 2015, p. 117)
[1360] (Herder, 1769 [2012], p. 402)
[1361] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 283)
[1362] (Pipes, 1993, p. 19)

a century later, the numerous autonomies appearing across the Steppe were quick to proclaim complete independence following the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917.

In Ukraine-proper, the Central Rada, proclaimed the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) and immediately found itself in a power struggle with the Bolsheviks.[1363] By 1918, the advancing Bolsheviks had reached Kiev, sacking the city, before being forced into retreat by the advancing columns of German, Austrian and UNR forces.[1364] After a year of German and Austrian occupation and the brief dominance of Pavlo Skoropadskyi's Hetmanate, the UNR re-emerged under the leadership of Symon Petliura.[1365] In the Kuban, or *Pink Ukraine*, Ukrainian Cossacks declared the "Kuban People's Republic" – scorning the socialist leanings of the Central Rada.[1366] In *Green Ukraine*, the Second All-Ukrainian Far Eastern Congress initially proclaimed a state of territorial unity with the Kievan government, but soon demanded independence.[1367] Finally, in *Grey Ukraine* and *Yellow Ukraine*, the Ukrainian activists found themselves rapidly drawn into the wider struggle between the Reds, Whites, and *Natives,* and ultimately merged with the *Little Russians* of those regions.[1368]

West of Kiev, the situation became even more incoherent. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire began to collapse in November 1918, some of the Ruthenians in Galicia (Red Ukraine) proclaimed the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR) and became involved in a genocidal war with the newly independent Poland over the fate of Lviv.[1369] Even once the Poles were in retreat however, fighting continued in the ZUNR, with Russophiles, Ukrainophiles and Ruthenophiles locked in an identarian war over the fate of Galicia.[1370] With the rise of the anti-Bolshevik Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries, Ukrainophiles were able to appeal to both national and economic emancipation – a factor that ultimately gave them an edge over their competitors.[1371]

[1363] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 283)
[1364] (Subtelny, 2009, p. 343)
[1365] (Hunczak, 1993)
[1366] (Koo, 2016, p. 278)
[1367] (Smele, 2015, p. 476)
[1368] (Wilson, 2015, p. 433)
[1369] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 41)
[1370] (Himka, 1999, p. 26)
[1371] (Wilson, 2015, p. 108)

By January 1919, the ZUNR and UNR were in unification talks. The Union between the still-existing Ukraines was, however, short lived. As early as 1906, Mykhailo Hrushevsky had noted the severe differences in culture and institutions between the westernmost Ukrainian cores.[1372] Indeed, for Hrushevsky, the situation was so bad as to necessitate the creation of "two nationalities on one ethnographic base… [much like] the Serbs and Croatians".[1373] As the example of the Rusyn has shown, there was a degree of truth to this. Yet even where both sides could proclaim to be Ukrainians, the ZUNR "offered an alternative concept of Ukrainian identity with a stronger civic base and a more obviously European orientation".[1374]

This was manifest in politics. The ZUNR had a long history of Parliamentarianism, dating back to the Austro-Hungarian autonomies of 1867.[1375] Within the UNR, the situation was decisively more post-Imperial, with numerous revolutionary regimes competing with each other throughout the period.[1376] There, the split increasingly became between Pavlo Skoropadsky's Hetmanate and the Tsarist order, and UNR Revolutionaries under Symon Pietliura's Directorate – both of which were opposed by ZUNR.[1377] Lacking the ZUNR's institutions that prevented the consolidation of executive power, the UNR was increasingly characterised petty dictatorships of crisis.[1378] This was nothing unique in Ukraine-proper, after all, even the Anarchist Black Army of Nestor Makhno was characterised by the autocratic institutions of rule on the Steppe.[1379]

Such tensions fed into foreign policy between the two Ukraines, which by early 1919, had become politically estranged. As such, the UNR was quick to abandon the "conservative ZUNR bureaucrats" favour of a pragmatic alliance with the advancing Polish Army against the Bolsheviks.[1380] Such political manoeuvring did little to save the UNR. On the contrary,

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[1372] (Wolff, 2016, p. 287)
[1373] (Prymak, 1987, p. 79)
[1374] (Wilson, 2015, p. 129)
[1375] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 41)
[1376] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 283)
[1377] (Subtelny, 2009, p. 343)
[1378] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 41)
[1379] (Patterson, 2020, p. 100)
[1380] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 38)

it pushed the ZUNR into securing an alliance with the Russian White Army, even as the Whites seized UNR land.[1381] Whilst the Whites would eventually retreat eastwards, they were replaced by the advance of Bolsheviks, who pushed the Polish forces back to the Vistula and seized control of Ukraine-proper.[1382]

What failed the UNR, in the end, was its inability to provide a coherent institutional framework and territoriality. Since proclaiming autonomy from the Russian Imperial Core in June 1917, the UNR had tiptoed towards independence – held back in large part by the dream of a federal union with Russia.[1383] Forever leaving the door open to the *other Ukraines*, the UNR pursued a model of *decentralised rule* "sufficiently flexible to integrate Ukrainian 'ethnographic lands' with various [alternative] political traditions".[1384] Yet whilst such provided for the unification of *Galicia* and *Green Ukraine* with Ukraine-proper, it prevented the development of institutions necessary for local governance.[1385]

In the end, the most successful period of institutional development occurred during the seven month Hetmanate Period of Pavlov Skoropadskyi.[1386] Rather than viewing Ukrainians as an ethnic continuum across the Steppe, the Skoropadskyi regime – for whatever self-interested region – viewed Ukraine as a concrete territorial body.[1387] By limiting sovereignty to the wild fields, the Hetmanate was able to develop an institutional framework, complete with a functional financial system, a national academy and a developed body of law.[1388] That said, the Skoropadksiy regime was, nonetheless, a puppet of Vienna and Berlin, and was thus left isolated by the end of the War.[1389] Its subsequent replacement by an even weaker *Directorate* in December 1918 would see a return to the less cohesive conception of Ukraine as "*all territories*, where the Ukrainian people

[1381] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 299)
[1382] (Himka, 1999, p. 58)
[1383] (Pipes, 1993, p. 21)
[1384] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 156)
[1385] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 255)
[1386] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 289)
[1387] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 40)
[1388] (Magocsi, 2010, p. 519)
[1389] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 289)

constituted the majority".[1390] By 1919, the question of Ukrainian territoriality was made increasingly moot by the rapid advance of the Soviet Red Army.

With the onslaught of a renewed Bolshevik Offensive, the remnants of the UNR fled westwards, joining the wider Ukrainian diaspora in cities such as Prague, Polish Lwów, and Montreal.[1391] There, a more stringent form of *Ruthenianism* developed, which would emerge two decades later in the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (ONU).[1392] The ONU, which had its basis in the Sich Riflemen of Galicia and the Skoropadski regime, would take up the ZUNR's *occidentalism*, ultimately morphing it into a violent crusade against Jews, Poles and the "Turanian" Eastern Slavs (Russians and Belarusians).[1393] Within Ukraine-proper, the UNR rapidly collapsed in the face of a consolidated Bolshevik Offensive.[1394] With the subsequent Treaty of Riga (1920), the Polish abandoned their previous support for Ukrainian Statehood.[1395]

The last holdout of independent Ukrainian Statehood, *Green Ukraine*, soon found itself squeezed between the retreating White Army of Admiral Kolchak and the advancing forces of the Japanese Intervention in Siberia (1918-1922).[1396] Whilst the White Army gained the upper hand in the immediate period, the end result was a Bolshevik coup and the establishment of a puppet Far Eastern Republic.[1397] With the Ukrainians folded into the Soviet State, it would be up to the Bolsheviks to answer the question "What is Ukraine? Where is Ukraine?".[1398]

The Bolsheviks had initially resisted federalism, insisting instead the the *World Revolution* was a continuous and unstoppable process.[1399] Yet whilst in 1913 it was "not the business of proletariat to preach federalism and national autonomy",[1400] by 1917 the Bolsheviks

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[1390] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 40)
[1391] (Subtelny, 2009, p. 312)
[1392] (Wilson, 2015, p. 129)
[1393] (Smele, 2015, p. 476)
[1394] (Adams, 1963, p. 63)
[1395] (Sanford, 2002, p. 5)
[1396] (Andrusiak, 2011)
[1397] (Smele, 2015, p. 476)
[1398] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 96)
[1399] (Ree, 2002, p. 211)
[1400] (Tewatia, 1975, p. 177)

were confronted by the centrifugal forces of Imperial disintegration.[1401] The consequent formulation was a commitment to national autonomy "recognised only for the proletariat [of those nations]" – a term that was often reserved for Bolshevik loyalists in the other nations.[1402] Thus, national autonomy was accepted by the Bolsheviks as a *Fait Accompli*, and later seized upon and leveraged against the "Great Russian Chauvanism" of the Whites.[1403] Such was justified by the Bolsheviks in that, per Marxist historiography, the *Proletarian Revolution* could only occur in the aftermath of a *Bourgeoise "National" Revolution*.[1404] As Khalid writes; "Stalin did argue that nations were transient: they arose during the capitalist stage of development and would wither away once Communism arrived".[1405]

The need to therefore make such nations part of the international proletarian revolution was the basis of the policy of коренизация (*Korenizatsiya* – "Indigenization").[1406] Marxist-Leninism had to be adapted to local conditions and local tongues, lest it remained an "alien faith".[1407] As such, Soviet nation-building served its purpose for the Soviet peoples. Languages were codified, folk songs were written, and the modern post-Soviet States – complete with their contemporary borders – were constructed from the ground up.[1408]

Overnight, the heterogenous premodernity of the Russian Tsardom was dragged kicking and screaming into modernity, emerging as a Byzantine hierarchy of Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs), Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), Autonomous Oblasts (AOBs) and Autonomous Okrugs (AOs); each organised around a titular ethnicity.[1409] Such territorial units would be ruled by carefully cultivated cadres drawn from the titular ethnicity and "given access to power and derived privileges from that access".[1410] Much

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[1401] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 40)
[1402] (Tewatia, 1975, p. 179)
[1403] (Khalid, 2021, p. 330)
[1404] (van Ree, 2002, p. 150)
[1405] (Khalid, 2021, p. 330)
[1406] (Chulos & Piirainen, 2000, p. 79)
[1407] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 416)
[1408] (Thomas, 2018, p. 127)
[1409] (Kelley, 1924, p. 62)
[1410] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 64)

like the Xiong-nu, the Soviet system let the cynical self-enrichment do the heavy lifting when ideology failed.[1411]

Korenizatsiya ended with the shift away from *Minoritarian* and towards *Majoritarian* rule in the 1930s, yet it was this pursuit, covered in **Part 4.9b** that created the first "organic" *Eurasian Empire*, and with it, the seeds were sown for the *Post-Imperium* of the Soviet Space.[1412] That said, whilst Soviet *Nation-building* was pluralistic, Soviet *State-building* was not. Soviet citizens were allowed to build their Nations, but matters of State, such as foreign policy and economic planning, were deferred to the Centre.[1413] Nonetheless, despite the SSRs being "pseudostate(s) at best", the golden cage of the Soviet System provided for the birth of Nations where there had previously been none.[1414]
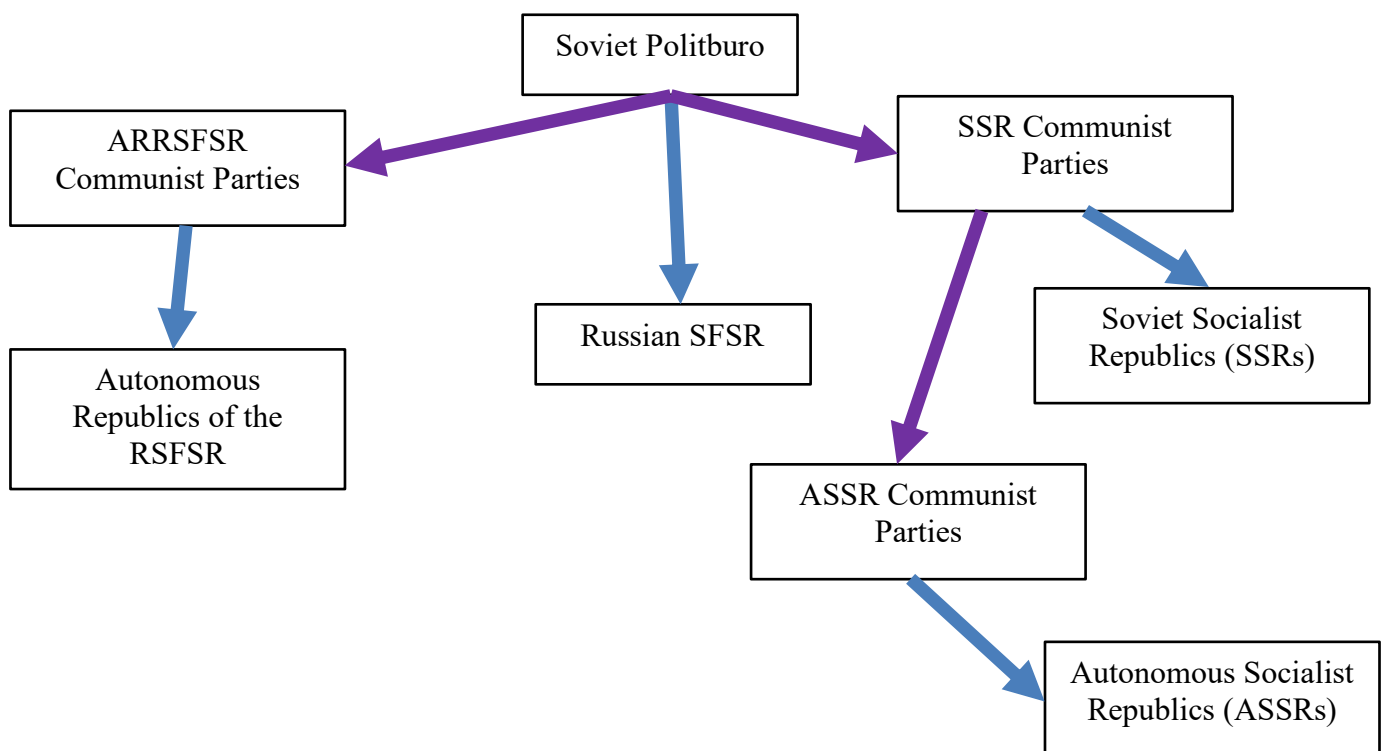
Figure 24: The Federal Soviet System

Figure 23 – Russia stands alone, without its own Communist Party. Per (Kelley, 1924, p. 62).
Blue Arrows indicate direct rule, Purple Arrows indicate advisory roles.

[1411] (Harl, 2023, p. 99)
[1412] (Nicolaïdis, et al., 2014, p. 211)
[1413] (Khalid, 2021, p. 330)
[1414] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 48)

4.9b The Eurasian Empire

In the period between the oubreak of war in the Steppe in 1916 and the consolidation of Soviet rule in 1919, the lands that form the modern day state of Kazakhstan had come under the control of the Алаш Орда (*Alash Orda*).[1415] As established in **Part 4.9a**, the Bolsheviks would eventually pursue a policy of *nation-building* within the Soviet Union.[1416] That said, the early experience of Central Asians with the Bolshevik-aligned Tashkent Soviet was one of open hostility, with the Soviet proclaiming that "the fact that there are no proletarian class organizations among the native population" rendered the Central Asians necessarily *reactionary*.[1417] As a result, the Orda had aligned itself with the Menshevik programme, seeking autonomy within a new Federal Russian State. That said, state building was necessary, and the Orda took up the task with revolutionary fervour.

The *Orda*, despite being heavily influenced by the Jadids, established a system of property law similar to that which envisioned "a shift back to collective owner- ship of the commons, as was prevalent before the Russian occupation".[1418] Such a system of property law differed from that in the Turkestan Autonomy to the south, which, having consolidated around the sedentary cities of Tansoxiana, based its traditions in Islamic Modernism.[1419] The sedentariness of the Turkestan Autonomy was its weakness, however, as it gave the Soviets a concrete target against which to throw their forces.[1420] The Orda, basing itself on the traditional mobility of all Steppe Polities, outlasted their southern neighbour by three years – ultimately strengthening their bargaining position vis-a-vis the new Bolshevik government, although only for a decade.[1421] In the meantime, however, the Orda would attempt to see off an immense famine and the turmoil of civil war.[1422]

For their part, the Bolsheviks were able to feed the *Steppe Cycle* of their growing bureaucratic apparatus through the reconquest of Tsarist lands and the reintroduction of

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[1415] (Galick, 2014)
[1416] (Khalid, 2021, p. 330)
[1417] (Ishakov, 2017, p. 95)
[1418] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 89)
[1419] (Ketenci, 2012)
[1420] (Khalid, 2021, p. 332)
[1421] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 91)
[1422] (Everett-Heath, 2003, p. 7)

Serfdom through the Soviet Passport System.[1423] By tying citizens to the land once more, the Bolsheviks could guarantee the maintenance of State coffers whilst controlling the movement of *undesirables*.[1424] In doing so, the Bolsheviks fell back into adopting the autocratic necessities of maintaining an agrarian state on the Eurasian Steppe.[1425] As the Cavalry-dominated Red Army expanded across the Steppe, the conflict resembled the Mongol conquest of the Rus' lands seven centuries earlier.[1426] Other similarities emerged. The system of "War Communism", for example, saw the peasantry once again plundered of "not only the surpluses, but [also] part of the grain the peasant needed for food".[1427] For a while, it appeared as if the *Red Horde* would consume its way across the Europe – aided by willing collaborators in the post-war revolutions occurring contemporaneously across the continent.[1428]

Following the Bolshevik defeat at the hands of the Polish in August 1920, however, the system began to break down.[1429] Unable to further expand, the Bolsheviks had to make concessions in their ideological commitment to Orthodox Marxism. Consequently, in 1921, the Bolsheviks adopted the New Economic Policy (NEP), transitioning to a mixed economy.[1430] Such concessions on ideology were just the beginning. Administrative changes followed, whereby the Bolsheviks were left in control of a weak *Dual-Administration Regime*, wherein;

> "Soviets [dominated] in towns, [whereas the traditional] communes [dominated] in the villages. Bolsheviks [thus] sat on district executive committees with little real influence among the peasants… The [rural] villages remained in many ways free of the urban-based authority of the state, and after 1921 much of the economic power over the production and sale of grain would also fall into the hands of the peasants".[1431]

[1423] (Longworth, 2005, p. 345)
[1424] (Manaev, 2021)
[1425] (Christian, 1992, p. 204)
[1426] (Christian, 1988, p. 763)
[1427] (Matthews, 1974)
[1428] (Okey, 2003, p. 165)
[1429] (Lancaster, 2021)
[1430] (Bandera, 1963, p. 263)
[1431] (Suny, 1998, p. 106)

Thus, after years of civil war, the Soviet government – now based in Moscow – ruled over an even weaker state than that which Tsars before them had ruled.[1432] Whilst Moscow pained over the loss of governing capacity, the limiting of Soviet Power in the Steppe gave the Jadids the chance to pursue nation-building at a greater pace.[1433] Once again, the policy of коренизация (korenzatsia – "indigenization) was pursued at full force, with modernists such as Adurauf Fitrat tearing down the traditional pillars of Uzbek society in pursuit of the *Millat* ("nation").[1434] In doing so, modernists such as Fitrat paid mere lip service to the Bolshevik regime in Moscow – using association with the Bolsheviks to pursue not-strictly-Socialist ends.

On the Steppe, things were no different, with land expropriations gradually dissolving the Tsarist policy of Russian Settlement, even whilst small-scale business was encouraged under the NEP.[1435] There was a wider logic to this. In transferring land to Kazakh Modernists, the Soviets hoped to achieve the triumph of sedentary agrarianism over nomadic pastoralism within Kazakh Society.[1436] Thus, rather than pursuing a policy of ethnically replacing the Kazakhs with Russians, Moscow settled on a policy of replacing them culturally.[1437] The beneficiaries of both policies were the Билар (Beylar – "chiefs"), the existing local leadership on the Steppe, upon who the Khanate had bestowed the power "to control livestock, migratory movements, and water points".[1438] An outgrowth of the *Qutlug* of the Steppe Tradition, the *Beylar* represented the vestiges of a previous order on the Steppe – one in which nomads roamed the Steppe and the khan ruled through *decentralised autocracy*.[1439]

[1432] (Figes, 2014, p. 136)
[1433] (Khalid, 2021, p. 309)
[1434] (Khalid, 2021, p. 309)
[1435] (Pianciola, 2019, p. 25)
[1436] (Olcott, 1995, p. 50)
[1437] (Pianciola, 2019, p. 50)
[1438] (Kerven, et al., 2021, p. 7)
[1439] (Kim, 2013, p. 21)

For Stalin, the *Beylar* and the NEPmen[1440] represented a threat to the power of the party, even as they served the same function.[1441] The Tsarist period had shown that the tools necessary for Capitalist development were anathema to the maintenance of an autocracy, and particularly so one as large as Russia.[1442] The Soviet Union, like the Steppe Empires of old, was thus economically *coercive* and *expansive* rather than *innovative* and *enhancive*.[1443] Just as unwilling to trade autocracy for growth, the Bolsheviks instead embarked on an intensification of the revolution. Lacking the ability to expand, Stalin doubled down on *coercion*, launching a massive mobilizational effort known as the Five Year Plan.[1444] In the words of Nikolsky, "the development of the revolution required its spread throughout the empire and vice versa—the preservation of the empire required the further development of the revolution".[1445]

The mass industrialization, accompanied by a centralisation of power and a widespread anti-religious cruade, constituted the Stalinist "Revolution from Above".[1446] The revolution represented a phenomenal effort in state-building that sought to extend the *Steppe Tradition* beyond the zenith reached by the Mongols.[1447] Thus, in either a repudiation of the *Steppe Tradition*, or in a perfection of it, Soviet Power was entrenched on the Steppe through a process of *Crisis, Militarization and Centralisation*.[1448] Overnight, the Soviet authorities reintroduced the policies of grain requisitioning associated with the period of War Communism.[1449] In an all-out drive to destroy the conservative culture of the rural peasantry, the Soviet authorities moved to exterminate the "bloodsucker" кулакѝ (*Kulaki*) – a term used to refer to peasants who hired laborers or owned livestock.[1450] At the same time, poorer peasants were confined to колхо́зы (*Kolkhoz*y – "collective farms"), wherein they were assigned to work teams and forced to work and "sell" their produce to the

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[1440] NEPmen refers to the "Nouveau Riche" of the New Economic Policy.
[1441] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 99)
[1442] (Longworth, 2005, p. 371)
[1443] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 209)
[1444] (Holland, 1973, p. 237)
[1445] (Nikolsky, 2017, p. 186)
[1446] (Ree, 2002, p. 211)
[1447] (Khalid, 2021, p. 327)
[1448] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)
[1449] (Viola, 2014, p. 63)
[1450] (Davies, 1980, p. 23)

State.[1451] Such produce would be used to feed a growing industrial workforce in the city, and to pay for the import of machinery and resources not available in the Soviet Union.[1452]

Like the *Direct Taxation Empires* of the past, the Soviets had shifted the object of plunder had merely shifted from the uncontrolled periphery to lands within the Empire. Yet it should not be viewed as an abandonment of *expansion* as a motor of growth. The ideology of *World Revolution* remained a core pillar of Soviet Legitimacy.[1453] Rather than discarding *World Revolution* entirely, Stalin instead maintained that "Only imperialist war created the necessary upheaval and insecurity among the ruling classes" and that attempts to "Spread the Revolution" against *capitalist peace* were "dangerous adventures".[1454] Yet such peace only existed in the West. To the south and east, the path for revolution and expansion remained open. Thus, the Soviets expanded into Central Asia, even whilst they maintained a passive posture towards the West. Such campaigns would see the Bolsheviks heavily involved in Afghanistan and Xinjiang – two areas of strategic importance that would overhand Soviet Policy until the end of the Empire.[1455]

As the Commissariat descended on the Steppe, *collectivization* took on a martial tone. Like the *Qutlug* of old, the Soviets moved across the countryside, slaughtering the "bloodsucker Kulaks" and bringing the Steppe to heel.[1456] Those unfortunate enough to be categorized as class enemies were shot, hung, deported to the wilderness, or imprisoned as decided by the local authorities.[1457] Yet as the Soviets crusaded against class enemies on the Steppe, such actions necessarily took on an ethnic dimension.[1458] The wealthier inhabitants of the Steppe Lands, from the Black Sea to the Pacific, were, by virtue of their longer history on the land, non-Russians.[1459] Consequently, the "hard edge" of *dekulakization* was directed against ethnic minorities within the Soviet Empire, leading many scholars today to

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[1451] (Viola, 2014, p. 65)
[1452] (Fainsod, 1970, p. 529)
[1453] (Ree, 2002, p. 211)
[1454] (Ree, 2002, p. 214)
[1455] (Dickens, 2017)
[1456] (Davies, 1980, p. 24)
[1457] (Fainsod, 1970, p. 529)
[1458] (Andriewsky, 2015, p. 15)
[1459] (Lemkin, 1953, p. 13)

conclude that Soviet policies in the period amounted to Genocide.[1460] This debate has continued within Ukraine and Kazakhstan, wherein the collectivization and the resulting famine are referred to as the Голодомо́р (*Holodomor* – "hunger extermination"), and the Ашаршылық (*Asharshylyk* – "the starvation") respectively.[1461]

Regardless of its intentions, Soviet policy – which coincided in a reversal of cultural autonomy – was in effect, a *Cultural Genocide*.[1462] The breakdown of the web of interpersonal relations that had maintained the economy of the Steppe since the time of the Kazakh Khanate meant that famine was sure to follow.[1463] When it did, it would cost the lives of almost 9 million Soviet Citizens.[1464] For the pastoralist nomads of the Kazakh Steppe, the seizure of even a few cattle would mean near-starvation conditions. Faced with such odds, survival was a matter of raiding rival clans or the wealthier *Beylar* – an outcome congruent with the aims of the Soviet administration.[1465] Throughout, Kazakhs abandoned their traditional ways of life, streaming into the cities, where they were joined by deportees from across the Soviet Imperium.[1466]

Soviet Policy had created a *Crisis* on the Steppe, and with it, created the conditions for *Militarization* – a militarization that was directed towards the Ulama and the Beys in the Great Terror (1936-1939).[1467] In such conditions, Moscow stood ready to emerge as the locus of *Centralisation*:

> "…Kazakh Beys were dispossessed by Kazakh activists, and it was poor peasants
> and radical urban youth or members of village soviets who went around
> confiscating the property of the Beys or closing mosques and shrines… the
> campaigns did much to mobilize the indigenous population to support the Soviet

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[1460] (Bilinsky, 1999, p. 147)
[1461] (Vanderkolk, 2023, p. 29)
[1462] (Lemkin, 1953, p. 51)
[1463] (Kindler, 2018, p. 80)
[1464] (Wolowyna, 2020, p. 501)
[1465] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 100)
[1466] (Wight, 2015, p. 363)
[1467] (Conquest, 1968)

cause. Those who participated in these campaigns acquired a new sense of loyalty to the new order…".[1468]

For almost a decade, Central Asia (and the wider Steppe) was gripped by warlike conditions. Old terminology, such as *Basmachi* was revied and directed towards the peasants and nomads who resisted Soviet Collectivisation.[1469] In Turkmenistan alone, almost half of the districts fell into armed rebellion or "chaos", and had to be put down through the deployment of a combined arms campaign by the Soviet Army and Airforce.[1470] Under the cover of war, the local commissariat moved against the Jadids, extinguishing the dream of an independent and modern Central Asia separate from the Soviets.[1471] This in itself was superfluous. The collapse of the traditional ways of life on the Steppe – the loss of the skills of pastoralism "acquired via hundreds of years of experimentation and local knowledge" – had rendered the people of Central Asia dependant on the Soviet System.[1472] Through a sacrifice of the old order, Moscow had bound the Central Asia to Russia. Through a blood quantum of similar magnitude, Russia would be bound to Central Asia.

The Terror came to an end in November 1938, but its end was belated in Central Asia, where violence continued until well into 1941.[1473] As the violence wound down, however, the *Crisis, Militarization and Centralization* had shifted northward into the Russian heartland. The cause, a massive invasion by the German Wehrmacht, might have been *exogenous* to Russia, but the effect was an *endogenous* transformation of the Russian realm.[1474] Thus, over the course of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), the Soviet Union sustained close to 27 million casualties.[1475] The highest number of casualties, approximately 14 million in total, was suffered by the Russian SFSR[1476] – a number that

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[1468] (Khalid, 2021, p. 365)
[1469] (Khalid, 2021, p. 369)
[1470] (Edgar, 2004, p. 209)
[1471] (Khalid, 2021, p. 386)
[1472] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 103)
[1473] (Khalid, 2021, p. 361)
[1474] (Figes, 2022, p. 382)
[1475] (Krivosheev, 1997, p. 291)
[1476] Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

amounted to close to 14 percent of the Russian population.[1477] The immense losses suffered by Russia, particularly by its male population, skewed Russia's demographics in a way that still has relevance to policymakers today.[1478]

The Soviet System had run on the redistribution of the agricultural wealth of Ukraine's *Chernozem Belt* to the rest of the Empire.[1479] With the Wehrmacht occupying up to 40% of the State's arable land, this system of redistribution began to break down.[1480] Beyond the frontlines, the immense hardship felt in Central Asia as a result of this crisis of redistribution was further compounded by the arrival of close to three million deportees, refugees and technical specialists as a result of the war.[1481] Following the specialists was the evacuation of over 15 million Soviet citizens and 1,500 industrial sites from the west of the Empire.[1482] With famine looming, a new generation of Central Asians – beholden to the motherland – went to die on the front lines.[1483] The result of this inflow/outflow of the people caused a dramatic change in the demographics of the Steppe, a factor that is visible in Kazakhstan's modern multiculturalism.[1484]

That said, the arrival of technical experts and heavy industry from Russia signalled a change in Central Asia's place in the Union. Having long been the target of plunder to feed the industrial cities of Russia, Central Asia now became the beneficiary.[1485] Holding such a geopolitically important position at such a critical juncture in the Union's existence gave Central Asians immense bargaining power vis-à-vis the metropole. Religion and expressions nationality crept back into public life, and the war became increasingly less framed in ideological terms and more in terms of Soviet Patriotism that held the "Soviet People" as being unique and having a unique destiny.[1486]

[1477] (Hartmann, 2013, p. 137)
[1478] (Adamson & DaVanzo, 1997)
[1479] (Myre, 2014)
[1480] (Khalid, 2021, p. 434)
[1481] (Wight, 2015, p. 360)
[1482] (Manley, 2009, p. 9)
[1483] (Wight, 2015, p. 362)
[1484] (Government of Kazakhstan, 2024)
[1485] (Khalid, 2021, p. 442)
[1486] (Wight, 2015, p. 364)

Through a manmade form of *Crisis, Militarization, and Centralizaiton*, Russia herself was transformed into a truly *Eurasian Empire* – one that, unlike that of the Mongols, possessed a "State Culture" and would survive the death of the Khan.[1487] The Soviets had, in other words, answered the contradictions of the *Steppe Tradition*. The collapse of European balance of power led to an emergent bipolarity between the two players still standing – the United States and the Soviet Union.[1488] The children of the Soviet Crisis would inherit a stronger Imperial core, but also a vast informal empire stretching from the Korean Peninsula to Germany. Whilst Stalin would attempt to reassert Russian predominance in the Union in his final years, even he could not turn back the clock – and Krushchev and Brezhnev would adopt the Leninist model of a *Multicultural Union* once more.[1489]

Figure 24 – *"For the Soviet East", 1940s Propaganda Emphasisng a cultural continuity between the Steppe and the Forest Zones of the Soviet Union. Per (Arbuthnot, 2019).*

[1487] (Allsen, 2001, p. 200)
[1488] See "Empire by invitation" per (Lundestad, 1986, p. 263)
[1489] (Khalid, 2021, p. 540)

4.10 The Collegium

With the death of the Great Khan, Joseph Stalin, in 1953, power became increasingly *Collegial*.[1490] Such should not be seen as a matter of *deimperialization*, however, as Motyl writes;

> "The totalitarian side of party rule was functional, extending into organizations, workplaces, and homes; the imperial side was territorial, extending to geographic agglomerations of functional units known as satellites, republics, provinces, and the like".[1491]

But what did such a Party-State look like? Notably for any analysis of the Soviet Union, the Party apparatus was not a national body, and certainly not a *Russian* body.[1492] In keeping with Lenin's view of "Great Russian Chauvanism" being a danger to the Union, subsequent Communist Leaders had sought to balance the demographic weight of Russia by empowering non-Russians through the party apparatus.[1493] The means by which this was achieved was through the subordination of Russia to the Soviet apparatus.[1494] The Soviet apparatus itself was *minoritarian* in structure – with an emphasis on the rights of the non-Russian Soviet Republics.[1495] Such was manifest in the fact that each Soviet Republic, apart from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR) had its own national academy and local communist party.[1496]

The Communist Party, like the Steppe Empires of old, "maintained 'vertical' integration by accommodating regional elites [and] coopting them into the management of the system".[1497] Yet the cost of such a system was that Russia was transformed into "an amorphous "everything else" republic [that] was never identified with an ethnic or historic "Russia".[1498] The ethnic Russian was transformed into the *Soviet Everyman*, and the

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[1490] (Figes, 2014, p. 210)
[1491] (Motyl, 2001, p. 49)
[1492] (Khalid, 2021, p. 320)
[1493] (Ioffe, 2003, p. 13)
[1494] (Hosking, 2006, p. 251)
[1495] (Smith, 2013)
[1496] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 443)
[1497] (Hughes, 1994, p. 1133)
[1498] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 444)

Russian SFSR was rendered a *tabula rasa* of Soviet Civilisation. As put by Geoffery Hosking and Yuri Slezkine:

> "[The Soviet Union was] a communal apartment in which each nationality had its own room except the Russians, who lived in the hallway, the corridor, the bathroom, and the kitchen; they ran the place and got in everyone's way, but they had no secure space of their own".[1499]

That said, whilst the Soviet Union had become increasingly divergent from its origins as the brainchild of Russian Communists, it should not be seen as having broken with the staples of Steppe Tradition. On the contrary, the Soviet Nationalities policy transformed the constituent republics and autonomous republics into *Sedentary Republics* upon the canvas of the *Russian Steppe*. With this done, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, led by its *Khan* or *Collegium*, maintained patrimonial links with the *Sedentary Republics* in the same nature as any *Dual-Administration Empire* on the Steppe.

Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, may have reconstituted patrimonial linkages across the Empire, but he nonetheless always retained his status as "first among the members of the collective leadership".[1500] Deeply aware of the insecurities in the Soviet Union's reliance on Ukrainian grain, Krushchev launched the Virgin Lands Campaign, pouring 10% of the Soviet Union's budget into the *sedentarization* and *agrarianization* of the wider Steppe, particularly North-West Kazakhstan.[1501] Yet in doing so, Khrushchev relied heavily upon Russian and Ukrainian settlers, leading many of the New Soviets to question the new leader's commitment to the "Friendship of the Peoples".[1502] With the migration of 1.7 million Slavic settlers southwards, Kazakhs felt the squeeze, falling to just 30% of their eponymous Republic's population.[1503] Nonetheless, the campaign was initially a success, albeit a qualified one, raising Kazakhstan's share in total Soviet grain production from 4% in 1952 to 30% by 1956.[1504] As the winds of change swept across the colonial world,

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[1499] (Hosking, 2006, p. 80)
[1500] (Tompson, 1995, p. 141)
[1501] (Durgin, 1962, p. 255)
[1502] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 121)
[1503] (Turekulova, et al., 2016, p. 274)
[1504] (Ketenci, 2012, p. 33)

Khrushchev was able to present Soviet Central Asia as an alternative path to decolonization.[1505]

By the 1960s, however, reliance on single crop rotation and outdated farming methodology – itself a product of *Lysenkoism*[1506] – had rendered Khrushchev's pet programme a failure.[1507] In addition, a series of foreign policy blunders had severely undermined Soviet Prestige. Under Stalin, the geopolitical necessity of securing Russia's "soft underbelly" in Central Asia had made relations with China a matter of significant importance.[1508] Likewise, Stalin understood the importance of party unity, with the breakdown of such leading to unpredictable "deviations" akin to the tribalism of the Caucasus.[1509] Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's totalitarianism in the infamous "Secret Speech" severely undermined the image of the Party and the Empire as a cohesive unit.[1510] Furthermore, in discrediting the former Khan, Khrushchev had undermined the very patronage networks that kept the Empire functioning.[1511]

In the post-war period, the Soviet Union had managed its presence in the Eastern Bloc through a "multilateral structure founded on a network of [informal agreements, later codified in] bilateral treaties".[1512] Although initially informal, such institutions were formalised in response to American efforts in the region, granting Moscow political control (COMINFORM),[1513] economic control (COMECON),[1514] and military control (Warsaw Pact) of its client states.[1515] Nonetheless, despite such *responsive multilateralism*,[1516]

[1505] (Smith, 1992, p. 7)
[1506] (Kolakowski, 2005); Lysenkoists held that genes were a bourgeoise invention, and that organisms were able to be modified to an unlimited degree by exposure to different material circumstances.
[1507] (Siegelbaum, 2016)
[1508] (Khalid, 2021, p. 314)
[1509] (van Ree, 2002, p. 127)
[1510] (Kemp-Welch, 1995, p. 101)
[1511] (Weiner, 2008, p. 144)
[1512] (Bílý, 2023, p. 16)
[1513] Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties
[1514] Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
[1515] Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance / Warsaw Treaty Organisation
[1516] The multilateralism was "Responsive" in the sense that it mirrored multilateralism present in the "American Bloc".

relations remained bilateral with intra-bloc cooperation impeded by the orientation of each satellite towards the Soviet Union alone.[1517] As such, the Eastern Bloc, comparatively more industrialised than the Soviet Union, became the providers of furnished goods that were unable to be manufactured within the Union itself.[1518] Thus, after a period of direct looting in the postwar, the bilateral dynamics of COMECON began to take shape:

> "Poland [was] to concetrate on machine building, shipbuilding, coal extraction and chemical production. Czechoslovakia [was] to devote its efforts primarily to the development of machine production for heavy industry, specifically the chemical and power industries. East Germany [was to] produce tools, power machinery and machinery for the metallurgical and chemical industries. Romania [was to] produce agricultural machinery and equipment for the petroleum industry. Bulgaria, in addition to raw materials, [was] to develop the chemical industry and specific machinery and equipment."[1519]

Here again, a *Dual-Administration,* governed by heterogenous contracting, had developed in the Informal Empire, even whilst a system of *Direct Taxation* had existed within the formal borders of the Soviet Union.[1520] Such a system allowed Moscow to maintain a buffer zone with the Capitalist West whilst *autonomizing* production through native intermediaries.[1521] The Soviets thus deputised their European Satelites in the same way that the Tsars had deputised the Bashkirs – as a "productive buffer zone" that was supported and *cultivated* by the Centre.[1522] In addition, as with all Steppe empires, a system of *Dual Administration* enveloped the entire hierarchy of power, with a *Comitatus* and *Qutlug* (in the form of the KGB) ready to step-in in the case of dissent.[1523]

Such a system, having taken shape under Josef Stalin, was now being gradually dismantled. Yet in removing the *Totalitarian State*, Khrushchev made transformed revolts

[1517] (Wallace & Clark, 1986, p. 12)
[1518] (Yakobson, 1949, p. 184)
[1519] (Skrzypek, 1961, p. 111)
[1520] (Yakobson, 1949, p. 195)
[1521] (Spechler & Spechler, 2009, p. 1645)
[1522] (Steinwedel, 2016, p. 46)
[1523] (Okváth, 2010)

against the Soviet Union into a public affair.[1524] Stalinist elites, no longer supported by the Centre, now found themselves at the mercy of reformists and liberals.[1525] Across the Warsaw Pact, the Communist Elite came under immense pressure to liberalise.[1526] In 1956, in both Hungary and Poland, such calls manifested in a push to withdraw from the Soviet sphere itself – an unacceptable to the Soviet Authorities, who were deeply aware of the Union's vulnerability on the Great European Plain.[1527] The result was an absolute bloodbath, as the Red Army was deployed to the two countries order to put down the emerging revolutions.[1528] Khrushchev may have disliked the bureaucratic totalitarianism of the Empire under Stalin, but he was far from a Liberal.[1529] Nonetheless, Poland, in contrast to Hungary, was able to negotiate a "Special Relationship" in which greater autonomy was granted to Warsaw in return for solid support of Soviet policy in Europe.[1530]

Yet Krushchev's actions also brought about a political crisis in the Soviet regime. Across the wider *Socialist World*, those who had pursued a model of socialist totalitarianism denounced Khrushchev's "revisionism", forming a tertiary block in the Cold War.[1531] Seeking to bolster Soviet prestige in the emerging "third world", Khrushchev expanded infrastructure development in Soviet Central Asia and became increasingly involved in postcolonial outreach.[1532] Such a policy position would ultimately draw Khrushchev into a nuclear standoff with the United States in Cuba in 1962 – a standoff in which Khrushchev ultimately blinked.[1533]

Rapidly losing legitimacy at home and abroad, Khrushchev tried to solidify his control at home, launching a brief and final offensive against Religion, Stalinism, and other opposition.[1534] As part of his campaign, Dinmukhamed Kunayev, the First Secretary of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, was removed from power. Kunayev had opposed

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[1524] (Rossman, 2013)
[1525] (Fursenko, 2006)
[1526] (Hall, 2016, p. 113)
[1527] (Okváth, 2010)
[1528] (Braithwaite, 2022, p. 265)
[1529] (Khalid, 2021, p. 504)
[1530] (Wallace & Clark, 1986, p. 5)
[1531] (Lüthi, 2010, p. 49)
[1532] (Tompson, 1995, p. 230)
[1533] (White, 1995, p. 232)
[1534] (Taubman, 2003, p. 613)

Krushchev's plans to incorporate southern Kazakhstan into the Uzbek SSR, and it had cost him his job.[1535] Kunayev's dismissal, however, became yet another example of Krushchev coming into conflict with an increasingly powerful *Collegium* – a product of the Great Patriotic War and the shift of power eastwards.[1536] Citing such "erratic behaviour" and "hare-brained schemes", the *Collegium* moved to secure its privileges, deposing Khrushchev in 1964 and replacing him Leonid Brezhnev.[1537]

The *Collegium* had moved against Khrushchev's reforms – which they saw as inherently destabilising – such did not mean a return to Stalinist repression.[1538] For Brezhnev and his colleagues, the state-building period of Socialism – the *Crisis, Militarizaiton and Centralization* – had come to an end, resulting in the creation of a "Developed" and "Mature Socialism".[1539] Under this rubric, the Soviet Union had ceased to be an engine of class struggle, and had now become "the party of the entire *Soviet People*", in which "major fractional interest groups are incorporated into the policy process by the state and its leaders".[1540] The сове́тский наро́д (*sovyetskiy narod* – "Soviet nation") had, like the Steppe Empires of Old, transformed into a "new human community sharing a common territory, state, economic system, culture, [a salient ideology], and a common language".[1541] Emphasising a policy of "trust in cadres", the Soviet Leadership recreated a centralised system of *patronage* that extended from the *Politburo* down to the village chief.[1542] In return, ethnic minorities in the empire were given unprecedented representation and cultural freedom.[1543]

Within Soviet Central Asia, the post-Stalinist years saw the emergence of a new, confident generation of leaders that knew the Soviet System and understood their place in it.[1544] In the Post-Colonial Global Paradigm, the Soviet Union posited Central Asia as the

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[1535] (Khalid, 2021, p. 511)
[1536] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 133)
[1537] (Khalid, 2021, p. 511)
[1538] (Taubman, 2003, p. 613)
[1539] (Khalid, 2021, p. 511)
[1540] (Bunce & Echolls, 1980, p. 3)
[1541] (Smith, 1992, p. 9)
[1542] (Service, 2009, p. 389)
[1543] (Zaslavsky, 1988, p. 228)
[1544] (Olcott, 1995, p. 54)

posterchild of *Socialist Development*, emphasising the ideal of a "Brotherhood of the Peoples" that was "Socialist in Form, National in Content".[1545] The Krushchev era had seen the Steppe transformed into a petri dish for Soviet experimentation. Such campaigns extended beyond the Virgin Lands Campaign, with the Kazakh SSR serving as the engine of the Space Race, and, more controversially, the Nuclear Arms Race.[1546] In undertaking such campaigns, Khrushchev had depended upon the absolute loyalty of local leadership – the questioning of which would see intervention from the Centre, as in the case of Kunayev.[1547] As for Kunayev, in his position as "Moscow's guy" in Kazakh SSR, he was able to "in the manner of the Khans of old, to substitute local patronage networks spurred on by the Soviet system with his own clientelism".[1548] Such networks would be crucial in his later return to power under Brezhnev.

The consequence of this deference to local leadership was a veritable "Golden Age" in Soviet Central Asia – a period of relative stability and growth wherein Communist elites were free to run their Republics as long as they upheld the Soviet social contract.[1549] Thus, the *Brezhnev Contract* was born, a system founded upon the preservation of six core values, namely: "Party hegemony, socialist egalitarianism, Soviet patriotism, the fraternity of nations, authoritarian continuity, and ideological conformity [towards the victory of Socialsim]".[1550] In other words, the contract upheld a Soviet rendition of the *Patrimonialism, Paternalism, Pluralism, Patronage, Policeism and Primacy* found in the Steppe Tradition.[1551] The *Brezhnev Contract* should not be confused with the *Brezhnev Doctrine,* a foreign policy doctrine cited by later Soviet governments to justify intervention in cases of *reformism* within the *Soviet bloc*.[1552]

[1545] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 130)
[1546] (Kassenova, 2016, p. 329)
[1547] (Khalid, 2021, p. 512)
[1548] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 133)
[1549] (Keller, 2019, p. 212)
[1550] (Gleason, 1991, p. 335)
[1551] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 88)
[1552] (Schwartz, 1975); "Reformism" here means any attempt to move away from a position wherein foreign policy is suborned to the Soviet position. "Soviet Bloc" specifically refers to those communist states that are loyal to the Soviet Union. In other words, not the China-alligned parties.

The flipside of stability is, however, stagnation. Of the five Central Asian leaders who entered office during the Krushchev-Brezhnev Transition, all but one would live to see the end of the Brezhnev period twenty years later.[1553] During their tenure, they presided over a period of decreasing efficiency within the Soviet system. The cause of such inefficiencies were baked into the system itself – the failure of Soviet *extensive* growth to keep up with the *intensive* growth of global competitors.[1554] Rather than allowing unproductive companies to fail, the Soviet strategy was to set quotas, and have them met by any means necessary.[1555] The consequence of such a system was twofold. Firstly, the inability of State enterprises to fail meant that inefficiencies in production were preserved and compounded upon.[1556] More importantly, however, was that the Central Government unintentionally incentivised both the false reporting of production rates, as well as the political graft associated with maintaining such deceit.[1557]

Corruption became normalised as familial and kinship networks emerged to fill inefficiencies in the Soviet System.[1558] Such patronage expanded up the governing apparatus, leading to the emergence of broad inefficiencies caused by the hiring and maintaining of personnel who were profoundly unfit for the job.[1559] The consequence at a System-wide level was a drop in production from 47% in the period from 1970-1975, to a mere 18% by the start of the 1980s – a transformation that resulted in many of the Settlers that had arrived under Khrushchev returning to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.[1560]

Importantly, the Soviet Union, undergoing such changes, did not exist in a vacuum. The Digital Revolution in the West – the broad onset of the information age – coincided with the Era of Stagnation in the Soviet Union and undermined the increasing inefficiencies of the system.[1561] Just as the Soviets were losing their competitive edge, three new sources of

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[1553] (Khalid, 2021, p. 513)
[1554] (Christian, 1992, p. 209)
[1555] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 132)
[1556] (Keller, 2019, p. 213)
[1557] (Holmes, 1993, p. 101)
[1558] (Khalid, 2021, p. 513)
[1559] (Kalyuzhnova, 2016, p. 33)
[1560] (Ketenci, 2012, p. 153)
[1561] (Christian, 1992, p. 1001)

Competition arose. The ongoing competition with the West had, by the late 1960s, shifted into a *détente*.[1562] Nonetheless, the need to maintain the western periphery of the Empire led to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1969 – a pre-emptive strike against liberalising tendencies in the satellite state, even whilst Prague had no stated intention of leaving the Warsaw pact.[1563] For the Soviet Authorities, the risk of *liberal contagion* spreading from Prague to a satellite state more willing to challenge the status quo was far too high.[1564]

In addition to the gradual loss of bargaining power against the West, the Soviet Union became increasingly concerned with its southern and south-eastern periphery. The *Sino-Soviet Split* undermined the security environment in Central Asia so carefully curated by Lenin and Stalin.[1565] As relations with Beijing deteriorated, the border between the two *fraternal states* became increasingly tenuous, leading to open conflict in 1969.[1566] In Moscow, the breakdown with relations – and the resulting alignment of Beijing with the west – posed a serious security concern for Central Asia; prompting the transfer eastwards of 8 additional divisions and part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal.[1567] Such troops were still stationed in the Central Asian republics when a third threat, that of a Revolutionary Iran and Afghanistan, exploded onto the scene in 1979.[1568] Beyond geopolitics, the region was commercially vital, with megaprojects such as the Uzbek Cotton Cultivation *apparently* generating significant wealth for the Empire.[1569] This was not the case, as covered in part 4.10.

Since October 1943, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) had presided over *official* affairs of faith within Central Asia.[1570] That said, with the loosening of censorship on the public expression of religiosity, fundamentalists – connected to the outside world through intermediaries in Kabul – began to form

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[1562] (Samuels, 2005, p. 661)
[1563] (Valenta, 1980, p. 121)
[1564] (Spechler & Spechler, 2009, p. 1645)
[1565] (Medish, 1963, p. 66)
[1566] (Goldstein, 2001, p. 985)
[1567] (Robinson, 1972, p. 1175)
[1568] (Asinovsky, 2018, p. 190)
[1569] (Khalid, 2021, p. 649)
[1570] (Khalid, 2021, p. 363)

clandestine study associations.[1571] As in Europe, civic spaces such as teahouses and sport clubs were converted into makeshift mosques, with sympathetic party officials turning a blind eye to such developments.[1572] Such covert spaces began to cultivate a generation of leaders such as Ishan Babakhan, who, remaining beyond the suspicion of official organs, began to hijack those organs in order to proliferate their particular form of *Islamic Revivalism.*[1573] With the entry of such "new scholars" into the academy, the *Conservative* Hanafiite school of Jurisprudence was outpaced by a *Fundamentalist* Shaf'ii school – which emphasised purifying the faith of its culturally-derived elements.[1574]

Ironically, this transformation was in-part supported by the Soviets, who sought to distance their Muslim subjects from any identification with "Sufi National Traditions" and create a Universal Soviet Islam.[1575] Nonetheless, by the time of the Saur Revolution in Afghanistan in 1978, the Muslim population of Soviet Central Asia – equipped with a new jurisprudential framework – was increasingly more inclined to see the Soviet Union and its Central Asian territories in terms of the duality of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*, rather than in the plurality of conceptions offered by Hanafi Jurisprudence.[1576] Tensions heightened further in April 1978 when a coup d'etat in neighbouring Afghanistan brought to power the *People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan* and the radically anti-religious *Khalq.*[1577] With the subsequent victory of the Islamic Revolution in neighbouring Iran eight months later, the dominoes started to fall.[1578]

Before the Soviet Union could formulate a response to the Islamic Revolution, it had spilled over into the Afghan city of Herat, where Afghans rose against the *Khalqists* with revolutionary fervour throughout late March, 1979.[1579] The five days of violence that followed claimed the lives of 25,000 Afghans and hundreds of *Khaliqsts* and Soviet

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[1571] (Peyrouse, 2007)
[1572] (Fierman, 1991, p. 27)
[1573] (Erşahin, 2005, p. 3)
[1574] (Peyrouse, 2007)
[1575] (Bennigsen & Wimbush, 1985, p. 115)
[1576] (Adiong, et al., 2019, p. 283)
[1577] (Amtstutz, 1994, p. 315)
[1578] (Asinovsky, 2018, p. 190)
[1579] (Gammell, 2015)

Advisors.[1580] The more important victim, however, was the Soviet policy of non-intervention in both Afghanistan, and the religious affairs of its Central Asian subjects. Overnight, Soviet Central Asia was closed off and Central Asian soldiers were redeployed elsewhere in the Soviet Union, lest they launch a similar rebellion.[1581]

As revolts continued to spread across Afghanistan in the coming months, the Soviet leadership deliberated on the degree of involvement required.[1582] By later November, it had become increasingly clear that drastic action was necessary. Consequently, the Soviet Union, increasingly led by Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, followed through the following month by deposing the Afghan government and occupying the country.[1583] The decade long conflict that followed strained Soviet coffers and ultimately caused the collapse of the Union.

Such developments had a disproportionate impact on the *Eastern Bloc*. Since the end of the Second World War, the Soviet-alligned world had sought to compete with the "capitalists" through the Steppe-derived model of "ever more extensive mobilization of existing resources".[1584] Whilst such strategies worked in Inner Eurasia, the economies of Central and Eastern Europe lacked the necessary manpower, raw materials and energy necessary to support an all-in gamble on further mobilization.[1585] Thus, by the end of the Khrushchev period, the Eastern Bloc was mirroring the Soviet union in reaching the limits of *extensive* growth, and the question of economic reform towards a more *intensive* model became increasingly pertinent.[1586]

From 1967 onwards the system of autarky had begun to break down, as the Eastern Bloc began to tiptoe towards economic reform.[1587] In the case of Czechoslovakia, economic reform threatened the emergence of a western-orientated market and foreign policy – a step

[1580] (Urban, 1990, p. 215)
[1581] (Peyrouse, 2007)
[1582] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 161)
[1583] (Figes, 2022, p. 412)
[1584] (Christian, 1992, p. 208)
[1585] (Christian, 1992, p. 208)
[1586] (Wallace & Clark, 1986, p. 7)
[1587] See, for example, Hungary. (Granick, 1973, p. 414)

deemed too far by the Soviet authroties.[1588] Nonetheless, in the wake of the "Prague Debacle", the economic reforms continued under the rubric of the Comprehensive Program for Socialist Economic Integration of 1971, which provided for "the export and import of quota-free commodities".[1589] More importantly, however, the shift towards intensive growth was an implicit internationalization of the Eastern Bloc Economy by the mid 1980s – with many of the Soviet Satellite States taking on immense debt in order to modernise and intensify their economies.[1590]

With the 1970s downturn in oil prices and the subsequent outbreak of the Soviet-Afghan War, the pressures on the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc were increased to an unbearable level.[1591] Whilst the Soviet Union had continued to discretely intervene in "remote troublespots in the third world" throughout the period of Détente, the direct intervention in Afghanistan was an imperial venture that was too large for the world to ignore.[1592] Not only did the Soviet intervention reset relations with the west to the nadir of the Cold War, but the Soviet government found itself isolated by even "neutral" organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement.[1593] The isolated Soviet behemoth, along with its client states, were then placed under increasing pressure, with the West cutting exports of vital western technology and raising the temperature through rearmament programmes.[1594]

In the Polish People's Republic, the 1970s had seen an increase in civil disobedience as the food prices rose whilst wages stagnated.[1595] The inability of the Polish Government to control the rise of *Solidarność* ("Solidarity") – a Polish Trade Union – had led to discussions amongst the Politburo for an armed intervention in December 1980 under the cover of the Союз-80 (*soyuz-80*) military exercises.[1596] Nonetheless, the fear of another Afghanistan – both in terms of polish resistance (backed by its historical precedent), and in

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[1588] (Faudot, et al., 2022)
[1589] (Vorob'ev, 1975, p. 56)
[1590] (Wallace & Clark, 1986, p. 11)
[1591] (Garthoff, 1985, p. 135)
[1592] (Tripathi, 1999, p. 10)
[1593] (Fischer-Tiné, et al., 2014, p. 123)
[1594] (Garthoff, 1985, p. 135)
[1595] (Neier, 2003, p. 251)
[1596] (Kozłowski, 2018)

terms of western pressure – hung over the heads of the Soviet Politburo.[1597] Such dangers of further escalation had been made clear by Jimmy Carter's threat to "transfer advanced weaponry to China" – weaponry that played into ongoing border skirmishes with China and the fear of such weapons ending up in the hands of the Afghan Mujahideen.[1598] Finally, as the wheels of the socialist economies ground to a halt – a crisis intensified by the slump in oil prices – the Eastern European satellite states became increasingly unwilling to assist Moscow in any prospective regime change in Poland.[1599]

Unable to pursue a military solution, Soviet strategy shifted to the political, with the Soviet Forces posturing militarily and pressuring the Polish government to introduce martial law and crush *Solidarność*.[1600] Nonetheless, it wasn't lost on the Soviet policymakers that the grassroots uprising in Poland differed significantly from the elite-led liberalisations of the Czechoslovak authorities two decades prior.[1601] Faced with the horrifying prospect another drawn out war, the Soviet authorities shirked military intervention and sought only to prevent Poland from becoming an active part of the "Western Bloc".[1602] Thus, in the words of Matthew J. Ouimet, "ideological considerations now took a back seat to Soviet international standing and internal stability".[1603]

The prolonged security and economic crisis had rendered *Dual-Administration* moot; the *Nations* of Central and Eastern Europe would emerge once more as sovereign units. The Soviet leadership, for its part, would count on the *Finlandization* of its former Satelite States – nominal independence in domestic policy guaranteed by Soviet leadership in foreign policy.[1604] The non-interventionist position of the Soviet leadership, announced behind closed doors in Sofia in 1985, would become globally known by Gorbachev's infamous speech in 1988.[1605] To the disgruntlement of the Communist Leadership, the

[1597] (Shvangiradze, 2023)
[1598] (Cynkin, 1988, p. 72)
[1599] (Ouimet, 2003, p. 218)
[1600] (Andrews, 1985, p. 135)
[1601] (Ash, 1983, p. 236)
[1602] (Andrews, 1985, p. 112)
[1603] (Ouimet, 2003, p. 202)
[1604] (Bílý, 2023, p. 360)
[1605] (Christian, 1988, p. 1055)

Soviet Union was letting each of the Eastern Bloc members go its own way. Unbeknownst to the Soviet Leadership at the time, however, was that they would take Russia with them.

4.11 The Collapse of the Eurasian Empire

Whilst the escalating conflict in Afghanistan placed immense pressure on the Soviet system, it alone would not have been enough to cause the collapse of the Union. As discussed in **Part 2.3**, Empires seldom fall apart due one factor – and an *ideological death* is almost always a necessity. Unfortunately for the Soviets, such a death was soon to come. As Soviet casualties climbed throughout the "surges of 1982", Brezhnev's health declined rapidly.[1606] Suffering from severe arteriosclerosis of the aorta, Brezhnev had suggested retirement to the Politburo as early as January 1982. The issue, however, was that the *Patrimonial* structures that had been put in place over the previous 20 years were not easily transferred to a *New Khan*.[1607] The insistence on maintaining the Status Quo, however, ultimately meant that the Politburo was moderately unprepared to find a successor when Brezhnev ultimately died in November of that year.[1608]

As in the *Steppe Tradition*, the death of the *Great Khan* saw power devolve to the *Right Doğri* – the ruler of the internal bureaucracy. In the case of the late Soviet Union, the inheritor of that position was Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB.[1609] Having been an influential voice in the decision to invade both Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, Andropov, at the head of the KGB, held the key decision-making capacity vis-à-vis the Afghan Crisis.[1610] As described by Thierry Wolton:

> "the Kremlin knew the external world over the borders as if over the high walls of a citadel through the prism of what was reported to it by the KGB. The Organs, in this way, could manipulate the members of the Central Committee and the Politburo, which, in the closed Soviet universe, was a sacred power".[1611]

Like the *Comitatus* of old, the KGB increased its hold over the state as power shifted from pure *patrimonialism* to *collegialism*.[1612] The leaders of the KGB, like the Xianbei of

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[1606] (Johnston, 2015)
[1607] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 133)
[1608] (Schattenberg, 2022, p. 348)
[1609] (Figes, 2022, p. 415)
[1610] (van Herpen, 2014, p. 161)
[1611] (Wolton, 2008, p. 24)
[1612] (Hope, 2016, p. 204)

Xiong-nu times, formed a new nexus of legitimacy from which new forms of patronage could be extended. It was through such means that Andropov and his protégé, Mikhail Gorbachev, rose to power.[1613] Both men were from a new generation of Soviet leaders who, having not witnessed the creation of the system, misunderstood the means by which it operated.[1614] Both men sought to increase the competitiveness of the Soviet Union by shifting from *extensive* growth to *intensive* growth – but such a shift could only be achieved through the removal of the very levers of Soviet Power – namely, *elite solidarity* and the maintenance of *patrimonial-collegial rule*.[1615]

Nonetheless, the new insistence on reform meant that many of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev-era leaders soon came under scrutiny.[1616] In August 1983, an investigation into the leadership of the Uzbek SSR uncovered immense corruption. Between 1978 and 1983, cotton production had been over-reported by 4.5 million tonnes.[1617] The controversy caused by the discovery, dubbed the *Uzbek Cotton Scandal*, burned a hole through the Soviet leadership and ideology alike.[1618] As Andropov's leadership gave way to Konstantin Chernenko and ultimately, Mikhail Gorbachev – public discourse within the Russian SFSR shifted from one of "a brotherhood of peoples" to one which framed Central Asia as a burden on the more productive "European" parts of the Empire.[1619] The consequence of such disquiet was the shattering of the *Brezhnev Contract*. By 1986, Moscow had replaced all of the Central Asian Leadership with Ethnic Russians.[1620]

In the Kazakh SSR, the removal of Kunayev and his replacement with Gennady Kolbin took on a unexpectedly martial character as the Kazakhs revolted.[1621] The violence, now known as Желтоқсан (*Želtoqsan* – "December") would see nearly 60,000 people take to the streets in Almaty in the most violent demonstration in Soviet Union until that point.[1622]

[1613] (Taubman, 2017, p. 138)
[1614] (Christian, 1988, p. 1025)
[1615] (Christian, 1988, p. 1038)
[1616] (Olcott, 1995, p. 115)
[1617] (Khalid, 2021, p. 643)
[1618] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 151)
[1619] (Khalid, 2021, p. 643)
[1620] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 152)
[1621] (Stefany, 2020, p. 13)
[1622] (Kuzio, 1988, p. 79)

More importantly, the *Željtoqsan* marked the first instance in which a *nationalism* other than *Soviet Nationalism* had been used for mobilization.[1623] What is fascinating from the point of view of the *Steppe Tradition*, however, is the means by which Kunayev was able to grow the Kazakh Nation out of the Kazakh SSR. As Christopher Hartwell writes;

> "…by deferring to the local authorities and stitching together kinship networks for support – as well as keeping lower-level chieftains happy via dispensation of state largesse – Kunaev was able to build a power base independent of the machinations of Moscow…"[1624]

It was these "lower-level chieftains", the Central Asian elite, who now joined the Kazakh citizens on the streets of Almaty.[1625] Just as the Shaybanids had lost control over the Kazakhs due to the inability of to keep tribute flowing, so too were the Soviets losing power due to their attempt to shut off rents and power to the local chiefs.[1626] As with elsewhere in the Soviet Realm, the response was immediate and military – leading to over 300 dead.[1627] Whilst Kazakh Independence would be achieved under a different movement – the anti-nuclear movement of *Nevada-Semipalatinsk* in 1989 – the *Željtoqsan*, nonetheless provided an anchor around which such frustrations could organise.[1628] In other words, the gauntlet had been thrown, and the Russian Imperium was once again rotting from Central Asia.

Notably for the purposes of this analysis, Kunayev's removal was gounded in a dual rationale: that he was an *insider* within Kazakhstan, and that he was an *insider* within the Brezhnev regime.[1629] Nursultan Nazarbayev – Kolbin's eventual successor and the founder of Independent Kazakhstan – may have been an *insider* within Kazakhstan, but he was no Brezhevite.[1630] Siding instead with Gorbachev's reformism, Nazarbayev manoeuvred into positions of power within the Kazakh SSR, cultivating a large network and ultimately

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[1623] (Stefany, 2020, p. 12)
[1624] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 153)
[1625] (Olcott, 1995, p. 225)
[1626] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 153)
[1627] (Khalid, 2021, p. 651)
[1628] (Phillips & James, 2001, p. 23)
[1629] (Cummings, 2002, p. 60)
[1630] (Khalid, 2021, p. 663)

replacing Kolbin, who had failed to do so.[1631] With pressures increasing on the Central Government throughout 1989, Nazarbayev and the Kazakh *de facto* Kazakh leadership were able to offer a compromise – leadership in exchange for loyalty.[1632]

Nazarbayev's compromise should not be surprising. Whilst the breakup of the Soviet Union is viewed within the West as being the collapse of the "Prison of Nations", such an analysis applies only to *sedentary* and *national* polities.[1633] When the Soviet Union had entered Europe, it had conquered lands with established histories and cultural boundaries that stretched back in one form or another for time immemorial.[1634] The Eastern Bloc, the Baltics, and the Caucasus all possessed an identity that was tied to the land, and had been so for centuries.[1635] In Central Asia, social organisation had long been a matter of the *Nomas* and not of the *Polis*. The nationalist discourses of Hungarian Turanists had succeeded in introducing the vocabulary of the *Nation* to Central Asia, but the institution itself remained foreign.[1636] Thus, legitimacy, as in the case of post-medieval Anatolia, was based on the *Yarliq* of Russian rule.[1637]

Problems with independence extended beyond issues with legitimacy. For the Central Asian Elite, it was impossible to consider "Central Asia" as a geopolitical space separate from the Russian heartland.[1638] Under the *Autarkic* Soviet System, each of the Central Asian Republics had been constructed as a "cog in a much larger machine".[1639] In pursuit of the creation of a *Socialist Motherland*, the peoples of Central Asia had transformed their lands into sedentary, export-focused national economies that provided raw materials to the Imperial Centre and received furnished materials in turn.[1640] In pursuit of *the ideal*, Soviet Central Asians had torn up the lands and traditions that had sustained them for centuries.

[1631] (Lillis, 2019, p. 115)
[1632] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 132)
[1633] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 112)
[1634] (Snyder, 2003, p. 13)
[1635] (Ross, 2013)
[1636] (Ablonczy, 2022, p. 113)
[1637] (Imber, 2002, p. 13)
[1638] (Khalid, 2021, p. 662)
[1639] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 132)
[1640] (Skrzypek, 1961, p. 111)

The Aral Sea, once a centre of the Steppe Aquacultural Economy,[1641] and depended upon by Karakalpak Nomads, was drained in pursuit of the "white gold" of the Uzbek Cotton Industry.[1642] The *Kazakh*, whose name means "wanderer", wandered no more – with the pastoral nomads of the Kazakh Steppe instead confined into a collective farm and transformed into a half-baked image of the *New Soviet Man*.[1643] The Soviet experience, as such, had transformed the people of Central Asia into *Mankurts* – the docile slaves of Chingiz Aitmatov's late Soviet Classic, *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*:

> "The *mankurt* did not know who he had been, whence and from what tribe he had come, did not know his name, could not remember his childhood, father or mother—in short, he could not recognize himself as a human being… [he] wanted nothing for himself, save food and such clothing that would prevent him from freezing to death on the Steppe".[1644]

Like the Mankurt, the Central Asians had been irreversibly changed by the Soviet Period. The pastoral *Nomoi* of time immemorial had been uprooted and transformed into a series of Republics, complete with national myths, codified languages, negotiated identity and the other trappings of any modern sedentary Nation State.[1645] Yet despite possessing an array of ethnically assigned markers of identity, the Central Asian States lacked the most important factor around which the States of Europe and the Caucasus could rally – a *National History* distinct from Russia.[1646]

As discussed in **Part 3.5**, Steppe Polities diverged from Sedentary Polities in that they were organised top-down – under the superstructure of a leader and his *Comitatus* forming a war band – rather than bottom-up, as in the case of sedentary polities selecting one of their own.[1647] The consequence of the breakdown of central authority, as discussed earlier,

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[1641] (Harl, 2023, p. 46)
[1642] (Kapuscinski, 2013, p. 255)
[1643] (Pianciola, 2019, p. 314)
[1644] (Aitmatov, 1980, pp. 127-130)
[1645] (Fialová, et al., 2010, p. 49)
[1646] (Chervak, 2023)
[1647] See (Lomas, 2017, p. 83); "Kings [in the ancient world] were appointed rather than being hereditary…The priest, the lawgiver and the warrior king are figures that frequently

was not the division of the Empire into regional blocks, as in the case of Sedentary Empires, but the emergence of competing political factions all seeking to maintain the same space.[1648] Had the Soviet Union been any other Steppe Empire, its collapse would've heralded in a new age of competitive anarchy in Inner Eurasia, with the leaders of the various republics competing for control over the entire space.[1649]

The Soviet Union was, however, a new kind of polity for the Steppe. Throughout Russian history, the Steppe had long been the *other* – the liminal space between the Kievan Rus' and Russia's emergence as a modern autocracy.[1650] For Russian policymakers, if the Steppe was not a source of danger, than it was a source of wealth – but only to the end of being a greater power in the European context.[1651] Well into the 19th Century, Russia considered itself a Slavic Empire, and thus did not concern itself beyond what was absolutely necessary with its Central Asian possessions.[1652] It was not until the 20th Century that Slavophile discourse began to give way to the Eurasianism – with *Traditionalists* such as Ivan Ilyn appealing to a pre-modern non-national order found in Russia's existence on the Steppe.[1653] The line from Ilyn, to the Left-Eurasianists, to the Bolsheviks, is thin, but not non-existent.[1654] In the wake of the Second World War, the Soviet Government would, ultimately, adopt a form of Eurasianism.[1655]

The fact of the matter is that the Russian Soviets, despite their paternalism, created a space for the *cultural* participation of Central Asians.[1656] The refrain of "Socialist in form, national in Content" is key here – the Central Asians were not permitted absolute independence, and created their states according to the demands of the Industrial Empire.[1657] Yet the fact that Central Asians nonetheless had *a hand* in the creation of their

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turn up in foundation stories in the ancient world…the distinction between priest, head of clan and king is fluid".
[1648] (Neumann & Wigen, 2018, p. 112)
[1649] (Harl, 2023, p. 241)
[1650] (Nahaylo, 1999, p. 648)
[1651] (Christian, 1988, p. 475)
[1652] (Longworth, 2005, p. 218)
[1653] (Robinson, 2019, p. 18)
[1654] (Smirnov, 2019)
[1655] (Laurelle, 2008, p. 23)
[1656] (Haselby, 2022)
[1657] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 130)

Nations – including the delimitation of their borders – meant that Soviet Central Asians, for the first time in their history, identified not with a city or a tribe, but with a *Republic* within a *Socialist Union* of *Brotherly Republics*.[1658]

The introduction of hydrocarbons and industrial technologies to the Steppe had made ways of life that were formerly impossible, possible.[1659] Yet the way in which such technologies had been introduced – the near-elimination of nomadic pastoralism and the integration of Central Asia into a larger economic system – had made any other way of life impossible.[1660] By the 1960s, Central Asians had come to possess "a common material culture, social structure, cultural value-system and historical memory" that extended well beyond that which had pre-existed the arrival of the *Eurasian Empire*.[1661] Thus even as the Central Asians resented the reassertion of the Centre over the periphery, independence was not a goal. Rather, Central Asian discourse was "a complaint about the unfulfilled promise of the Leninist nationalities policy and a plea for its implementation".[1662]

Within the *Sedentary Republics*, and indeed within the Russian SFSR, the conversation could not be more different. Whilst the popular perception of the Soviet Union is that of a Russian Imperial Project, such views often obscure the very real drive for "affirmative-action" within the Union.[1663] Such programmes, whilst having starts and stops throughout Soviet history – particularly during the Stalinist and Khrushchev period – nonetheless were resented by ethnic Russians, who formed a disproportionate share of the working-class and the intelligentsia within the Union.[1664] As the Soviet System buckled under 20 years of stagnation and falling oil prices, Gorbachev introduced a series of liberalisation measures known as *Perestroika* ("Restructuring").[1665] In relaxing price controls, however, the Soviet Government threw the economy into disarray.[1666]

[1658] (Khalid, 2021, p. 512)
[1659] (Christian, 1988, p. 568)
[1660] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 130)
[1661] (Bohr, 2004, p. 486)
[1662] (Khalid, 2021, p. 660)
[1663] (Martin, 2001, p. 13)
[1664] (Slider, 1985, p. 535)
[1665] (Figes, 2022, p. 318)
[1666] (Christian, 1988, p. 1049)

Job security went into freefall as layoffs surged in the name of competitiveness. Basic consumer goods disappeared as production shifted away from the "price controlled" goods to "market goods" that could be sold for a profit.[1667] Former state monopolies thrived, and out-competed any potential entrepreneurial class that Gorbachev had wished to cultivate. Where such small businesses did emerge, they siphoned subsidies from the Soviet government in pursuit of new technologies that were then sold on to the larger conglomerates for a quick profit.[1668] In seeking to increase market transparency, Gorbachev introduced *Glasnost* ("Openness") and *Democratizatsiya* ("Democratization"), effectively ceding control over the reform process.[1669] Suddenly, the crimes of the Soviet regime were brought into the open – and laid at squarely the feet of the increasingly demoralised ethnic Russians.[1670]

The lifting of restrictions on the Press brought to light the scandal of corruption in Central Asia. Pessimistic analyses painted a picture of a Central Asia that had not progressed beyond the religious obscurantism and petty chieftainship of the 1920s.[1671] In reality, the increasing role of religion, local corruption and "aggressive natives" had been a fairly recent development – but the cynicism caused by the collapse of the state-owned narrative gave rise to increasing speculation about the legitimacy of Soviet Universalism.[1672] A dominant narrative emerged in which Russians had also suffered under the Empire, and thus should join in the "Parade of Sovereignties" that had begun to take place across the Soviet Realm.

The timing couldn't have been worse. *Perestroika* and *Democratizatsiya* had sought to separate the party-state apparatus and introduce leadership-by-election in the place of leadership-by-appointment – even whilst the system remained dominated by the Communist Party.[1673] The idea, in theory, was to prevent Communist Leaders from utilising elite bases of power to circumvent popular discontent at corruption or inefficient

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[1667] (Mazat, 2015, p. 25)
[1668] (Christian, 1988, p. 1049)
[1669] (Taubman, 2017, p. 113)
[1670] (Bessinger, 2009, p. 340)
[1671] (Khalid, 2021, p. 650)
[1672] (Erşahin, 2005, p. 3)
[1673] (Kolesnikov, 2022)

leadership. Far from empowering the Soviet People, Gorbachev sought to, like the *Feudal* kings of old, partner with the Soviet People where necessary against the "nobility" of the Soviet regime.[1674] In transforming local party chiefs into "Presidents" separate from parliamentary groupings, Gorbachev hoped to push back against the *conservative*[1675] delegates of the Party.[1676]

In practice, however, the bifurcation of the party-state apparatus transformed both the party and state in ways that diverged from Gorbachev's goal of maintaining Soviet Unity. The immediate result was that the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), Autonomous Okrugs (AOs) and Autonomous Oblasts (AOBs) immediately demanded equal footing with the Soviet Socialist Republics.[1677] Yet the "indigenization" of party officials also empowered separatism, as movements began to spring fourth from the liberal wing of Communist Establishment throughout the Baltics and the Caucasus.[1678] The situation very quickly entered the realm of absurdity, as activists simultaneously stood in favour of *complete independence* but denied any intention of leaving the Soviet Union.[1679] This fraying of political authority contributed to a fraying of the institutions that held the Empire together. The *Zartmanian Model* began to set in as "Power devolve[d] to the peripheries [as] the centre [fought] among itself".[1680]

The open media environment had other impacts. In the Baltic States, the approaching anniversary of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was met with ever increasing acts of resistance against the Soviet Authorities.[1681] With discussions now occurring in the open, the moral foundation of the Empire – the "liberation from Nazi Aggression" – was increasingly scrutinized.[1682] No longer purified of anti-communist elements, Soviet "democratic" institutions themselves became directed towards the centre – with members

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[1674] (Curtis, 1996, p. 213)
[1675] "Conservative" here is with reference to the Soviet status quo – ie; the more hard-line Communists of the party.
[1676] (Garthoff, 1994, p. 360)
[1677] (Gorbachev, 1995, p. 321)
[1678] (Lieven, 1993, p. 227)
[1679] (Lieven, 1993, p. 229)
[1680] (Zartman, 1995, p. 65)
[1681] (Lieven, 1993, p. 221)
[1682] (Snyder, 2003, p. 320)

of the ruling parties often being involved in the "Popular Fronts" that drove the push toward independence.[1683] The result was a trend of *sovereigntism* that began in 1988 with the Estonian insistence on "the primacy of Estonian Laws [vis-à-vis the Union Centre]".[1684] That declaration spurred on likeminded activists to do the same, spreading throughout the *Sedentary Republics* of Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaijan and Georgia before arriving in Russia.[1685] With Russia "declared sovereign", the remaining republics followed suite, rushing to strengthen their negotiating position vis-à-vis the centre.[1686]

Whilst the Centre was willing to allow for the *Finlandization* of the Warsaw Pact, it would not stand by as the Union itself began to dissolve.[1687] Throughout the period of crisis,[1688] Soviet Military, with the assistance of pro-Soviet civil organisations such as the various national *Interfront(s)*, attempted to re-occupy the Baltic.[1689] The collapsing *imperial ideology*, however, had disastrous effects on the cohesion of the armed forces. For instance, when General Dzhokhar Dudayev, an ethnic Chechen, was asked to shut down Estonian media networks in 1989, he refused.[1690] The multi-ethnic empire had long relied upon the loyalty of its subjects to the imperial ideology, but with the ideology dead, the incentive for the perpetuation of Soviet Rule no longer existed. Soviet rule, per Antonol Lieven "was based on lies [of liberation]", which now came apart under the scrutiny afforded by *Glasnost*.[1691] Thus the Soviet Empire, having based its legitimacy on an ideology of lies, was in an even worse position than the Tsarist Empire that preceded it.

In previous periods of turmoil, the Soviet leadership could fall back on the demographic weight of Russians to restore order in the Soviet System.[1692] Indeed, in such matters of defence (against external or internal threats) the Soviet Government possessed one of the most powerful militaries in human history.[1693] Yet the *concrete severance* of that military

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[1683] (Šalda, 2021, p. 36)
[1684] (Walker, 2003, p. 63)
[1685] (Walker, 2003, p. 63)
[1686] (Walker, 2003, p. 62)
[1687] (Gorbachev, 1995, p. 321)
[1688] 1988-1991
[1689] (Lane, 2014, p. 213)
[1690] (Cornell, 2005, p. 175)
[1691] (Lieven, 1993, p. 222)
[1692] (Bessinger, 2009, p. 345)
[1693] (Sakhwa, 1990, p. 233)

into demographic units – a matter caused by the breakdown of trust for Soviet Central Asians – led to the Soviet-Afghan War transforming into a Russo-Afghan War by 1989.[1694] The ethnic Russian officer class of the Soviet Military became increasingly demoralised, particularly following the April 9th Massacre in Tblisi, Georgia – wherein Gobachev and the Politburo refused to take responsibility for their role, publicly shifting the blame to the armed forces and the intelligence agencies.[1695] Such demoralisation only increased with the shift to a more federal model.

> "…at plenums of district and oblast committees and in the press, they asked: 'Why should all the republics have their own Communist parties and their own central committees, but not Russia?' They argued that this was unfair… The Union state was represented as a tool for redistribution that took from Russians what they produced [and redistributed it to the other Republics]…"[1696]

The result was that the Russian SFSR, the main pillar of the Soviet Empire, was increasingly co-opted by Russian nationalists who sought the supremacy of Russian laws over those of the Union.[1697] The culmination of such trends was the *Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian SFSR* in June 1990, a move that "drove the first nail in the coffin of the Union state".[1698] The second nail was soon to follow. In March 1991, recognising that the ideological basis of the Empire was increasingly fraught, Gorbachev launched the *New Union Treaty*.[1699] The Treaty aimed to preserve the union as a less centralised regional bloc whilst providing for the continuation of cooperation in defence, foreign affairs, finances and energy.[1700] Yet it would have done so on an equal basis, removing the distinction between the SSRs, ASSRs, AOs and AOBs.[1701]

[1694] (Daugherty III, 1994, p. 172)
[1695] (Taylor, 2003, p. 223)
[1696] (Gorbachev, 1995, pp. 346-351)
[1697] (Bessinger, 2009, p. 345)
[1698] (Gorbachev, 1995, p. 345)
[1699] (Snyder, 2003, p. 312)
[1700] (National Technical Information Service, 1991)
[1701] (Walker, 2003, p. 88)

Figure 25 – The attitudes of the New Union republics towards the formation of the New Union. Note the lack of distinction between the SSRs, ASSRs, AOs and AOBs, and the impact it would have had on the territory of the future Russian Federation. Note also the Boycotting States (Black) include the Ngorno-Karabakh ASSR. Note the reactive states (light red) include Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Finally, note Belarus's firm commitment to the New Union (dark red).

Tellingly, the treaty was boycotted or partially boycotted by the *sedentary republics* of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia.[1702] Elsewhere, such as in the Kazakh SSR, the New Union Treaty was more warmly received. Over 94% of Kazakhs had voted to preserve the union, and the Kazakh SSR had the highest turnout at 88%.[1703] For most of the Soviet Central Asians, "no Union meant no spoils and an uncertain future" sandwiched between Russia, Iran, and China.[1704] The mutual distrust between the elite and the common citizenry made Moscow a necessary third party for both.

Before the new Treaty could be considered, and in part because it was going to be implemented, Communist Hardliners intervened. On the 19th of August 1991, a group of Soviet patriots declared themselves the *State Committee on the State of Emergency*

[1702] (Bessinger, 1991, p. 25)
[1703] (Gleason, 1999, p. 242)
[1704] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 160)

(GKChP)[1705], and launched a coordinated coup across the USSR in the hope of preventing what they saw as the "collapse, disintegration, decay in the Union".[1706] Yet despite their appeal to "[the] multinational Soviet people",[1707] the GKChP was banking on the mobilisation of ethnic Russians against the "traitors to the motherland" – a mobilization that never came.[1708]

On the contrary, the coup emboldened the separatists tendencies of the sovereign republics. Within Russia, popular support rallied behind the up and coming President of the Russian SFSR, Boris Yeltsin.[1709] Having overplayed their hand, the GKChP soon found themselves on the run from Russian officials.[1710] Armed with newfound legitimacy, Yeltsin began clearing house – signing accords to jettison the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from Russian territory and to eject Russia from the Soviet Union.[1711] In doing so, however, Yeltsin had to contend with the territorial and institutional incoherence of an emerging Russian state wherein almost 50% of the territory was administered by non-Russian ethnic entities.[1712]

Decades of Soviet rule, which had seen Russia play the part of an empty vessel into which Soviet republics were inserted, necessarily had deprived Russia of an institutional and territorial basis for independence.[1713] Transition for the other republics was somewhat simpler in that pre-existing institutions and traditions of territoriality provided for a degree of inertia in the transition to full independence.[1714] For the emerging Russian federation, the only solution was the appropriation of Soviet institutions and assets, and the renegotiation of the Russian SFSR's borders.[1715] The culmination of such moves was during the *August Days* of 1991, which saw the Russian SFSR unilaterally seize control of

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[1705] Russian Acronym, from Государственный комитет по чрезвычайному положению (*Gosudarstvennyy Komitet Pro Črezvyčaynomu Položeniyu*)
[1706] (Zyuganov, 1991)
[1707] (Bondarev, et al., 1991)
[1708] (Dunlop, 1995, p. 229)
[1709] (Braithwaite, 2022, p. 278)
[1710] (Synovitz, 2016)
[1711] (Zyuganov, 1991)
[1712] (Walker, 2003, p. 88)
[1713] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 443)
[1714] (Hosking, 2006, p. 251)
[1715] (Gorbachev, 1995, p. 582)

the armed forces, the KGB and the interior ministry.[1716] The façade of pluralism that had allowed the Soviet Union to function was beginning to crack.

Non-Russian Elites in the *Steppe Republics* began to worry for their privileges, and throughout August, the union began to dissolve completely as Soviet elites in the *Steppe Republics* moved to shore up their positions as the founders of new republics.[1717] The belated transition to full independence paled in comparison to the *Sedentary Republics* of Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Armenia and Georgia – all of whom had declared independence in May of that year.[1718] In those cases, which Katarina Wolczuk has termed "bottom up", the Soviet Elites played a minor role, and were really at the mercy of a civil society drunk on reclaiming popular sovereignty based in an existing territorial tradition. "Top down" cases, then, were motivated less by a strong civil society and and re-emergent tradition of popular sovereignty, but rather by inter-elite conflicts in the Soviet system.[1719]

Such inter-elite rivalry launched Ukraine into declaring independence in the middle of the *August Days*. The exact means by which such came to pass is covered in Part 4.12, but importantly for this chapter, the move towards independence was a gamble on the part of the Ukrainian Elite. Thus, whilst independence was declared, its realization was contingent on a referendum that was due to take place in early December 1991.[1720] The Ukrainian elite were only too aware that 70% of Ukrainians had voted for the New Union Treaty – a matter that would see them potentially unseated if they pushed for an unpopular independence.[1721]

Nonetheless, the unexpected and potential departure of Ukraine – with her demographic and resource wealth – was enough to cause panic in Moscow. Pavel Voshchanov, Yeltsin's press secretary, declared that Russia had the right to question the territorial integrity of its neighbours should they refuse to participate in a New Union with Russia.[1722] In making

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[1716] (Walker, 2003, p. 141)
[1717] (Christian, 1988, p. 1061)
[1718] (Walker, 2003, p. 140)
[1719] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 60)
[1720] (Walker, 2003, p. 140)
[1721] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 429)
[1722] (Walker, 2003, p. 140)

such threats, Moscow was hoping for a *Cassus Beli* based on securing the right of self-determination of Russians in the Post-Imperium – a embryonic notion that came to be known as the *Primakov Doctrine*.[1723] It was thus an absolute humiliation for Moscow that even the Russian-speaking regions of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea voted heavily in favour of Ukrainian Independence.[1724] Yet Yeltsin had underestimated the "[eternal] Cossack desire to have Ukrainian nobility" and the ability of conservative elites to use anti-reformism as a platform for independence.[1725]

In comparison to other SSRs, Ukraine was a "mixed case" in that it was composed of both a *sedentary territorial tradition* as well as a *Steppe Tradition*.[1726] In the aftermath of the Great War, Ukraine's inability to consolidate its territory led to the weak and decentralised UNR folding back into the dominant Eurasian Empire of the time – the Bolsheviks.[1727] The subsequent conquest of the ZUNR by the Polish State did little to extinguish the underground national revival taking place in Galicia and Transcarpathia.[1728] The incorporation of such territories into the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 merely shifted the Iron Curtain westwards and provided for the underground proliferation of revivalism across Ukraine-proper.[1729] That said, for its adherents, it was notably more cohesive than the UNR's Pan-Ruthenianism.[1730] National development under Soviet rule had seen *The Ukraine* transform into a unitary Ukrainian SSR – a concrete Nation State.

Despite such changes, however, Ukrainian Nationalism remained far from a *majority faith*.[1731] The removal of the *Brezhnevite* Volodymyr Shcherbytsky and his replacement by the *Gorbachevite* Volodymyr Ivashko in 1989 lifted the lid on censorship, but merely revealed the predominance of Ukrainian Nationalism in the West – hardly a surprising revelation.[1732] So lethargic was the Ukrainian nationalist movement, that the declaration of

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[1723] (Melvin, 2012)
[1724] (Walker, 2003, p. 140)
[1725] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 474)
[1726] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 60)
[1727] (Subtelny, 2009, p. 343)
[1728] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 51)
[1729] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 270)
[1730] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 156)
[1731] (Wilson, 1997, p. 180)
[1732] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 66)

sovereignty – which passed almost a month after the Russian declaration – being more of an act of preparation for a renegotiated union.[1733]

It is with a degree of irony, then, that the serious push for Ukrainian independence began to pick up speed under Leonid Kravchuk, a former *agitpropnik* tasked with uprooting nationalist movements.[1734] Yet Kravchuk and the growing chorus of *National Communists* saw independence as the only means by which to preserve the status quo against the reformism of Yeltsin and his colleagues.[1735] Ukrainian independence was thus a conflation of three forces: Ukrainian nationalism, popular anti-reformism, and the self-interest of Ukrainian elites, sought to preserve their privileges against a newer more centralised union with Moscow.[1736] The Ukrainian declaration of independence thus more closely resembled the Cossack rebellion against the Polish than the contemporaneous movements in the Baltic and Caucasus.[1737] The *Aristocratic Chiefs* had regained their autonomy from the Empire, but they had done so without regard to the securitizing role of the *Khagan* – a factor that would play a major role in Ukraine's future history.

It is no understatement to state that Ukrainian independence was the death knell of the Soviet Union.[1738] In seizing the initiative from a re-centralising Moscow, Kyiv had driven a stake into the heart of Russian *reimperialization*.[1739] The "coup-like imposition of Ukrainian command over Soviet Army units stationed on Ukrainian Soil" rendered Moscow impotent and forced Yeltsin to save face through the curation of some kind of "civilised divorce".[1740] The subsequent signing of the Belovezha Accords between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus offered just that in the form of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[1741] By the end of the year, the Soviet Union had ceased to exist – and the newly independent Russian Federation appeared on life support. It is in this context that Motyl wrote his initial thesis on *reimperialization*.

[1733] (Walker, 2003, p. 62)
[1734] (Patil, 2022)
[1735] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 474)
[1736] (Wolczuk, 2001, p. 77)
[1737] See (Hartwell, 2016, p. 474) for this comparison.
[1738] (Plokhy, 2015, p. 431)
[1739] (Christian, 1988, p. 1062)
[1740] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 93)
[1741] (Gorbachev, 1995)

Table 4: The Break-up of the Soviet Empire

Date:	Event:
16/12/1986	Želtoqsan Riots in Kazakhstan
15/11/1988	Estonia declares sovereignty.
08/05/1989	Lithuania declares sovereignty.
28/06/1989	Latvia declares sovereignty.
23/09/1989	Azerbaijan declares sovereignty.
18/11/1989	Georgia declares sovereignty.
01/01/1990	Poland withdraws from the Warsaw Pact.
11/03/1990	Lithuania declares independence.
04/04/1990	Latvia declares Soviet occupation illegal.
08/04/1990	Estonia declares Soviet occupation illegal.
12/06/1990	Russia declares sovereignty.
20/06/1990	Uzbekistan declares sovereignty.
23/06/1990	Moldavia declares sovereignty.
16/07/1990	Ukraine declares sovereignty.
27/07/1990	Byelorussia declares sovereignty.
22/08/1990	Turkmenistan declares sovereignty.
23/08/1990	Armenia declares sovereignty.
24/08/1990	Tajikistan declares sovereignty.
25/08/1990	Abkhaz ASSR declares sovereignty.
02/09/1990	Preindestrovian ASSR declares sovereignty.
20/09/1990	South Ossetian ASSR declares sovereignty.
24/09/1990	East Germany withdraws from the Warsaw Pact.
25/10/1990	Kazakhstan declares sovereignty.
15/12/1990	Kirghizia declares sovereignty.
13/01/1990	*January Events* in Lithiania.
09/04/1991	Georgia declares sovereignty.
01/07/1991	Warsaw Pact dissolved in Prague.

19/08/1991	*Failed Soviet Coup* in Moscow.
20/08/1991	Estonia declares independence.
21/08/1991	Latvia declares independence.
24/08/1991	Ukraine declares independence.
25/08/1991	Byelorussia declares independence.
27/08/1991	Moldova declares independence.
29/08/1991	Supreme Soviet of the USSR abolishes the Communist Party in the entire Soviet Territory.
30/08/1991	Azerbaijan declares independence.
31/08/1991	Kyrgyzstan declares independence.
01/09/1991	Uzbekistan declares independence.
06/09/1991	The Soviet Union recognises the independence of the Baltic Republics.
09/09/1991	Tajikistan declares independence.
21/09/1991	Armenia declares independence.
18/09/1991	Azerbaijan declares independence.
27/10/1991	Turkmenistan declares independence.
01/11/1991	Chechen ASSR declares independence.
06/11/1991	Communist Party banned in Russia.
01/12/1991	Ukraine declares independence.
12/12/1991	Russia declares independence.
16/12/1991	Kazakhstan declares independence.
25/12/1991	Russian Federation established on the territory of the Russian SFSR, all Soviet Republics recognised as independent.
31/12/1991	All Soviet institutions declared "ceased".

4.12 The Steppe Tradition and its Implications for the Post-Soviet

The collapse of the last great Eurasian Empire led to a plethora of outcomes that were all deemed characteristic of the "Post-Soviet" by contemporary observers.[1742] Had the CIS succeeded in its goal of providing a New Union, perhaps such a classification would have possessed utility. With the rapid divergence in the experiences between the Baltic, Cacasus and Central Asian states, however, a broader pattern appears – that between those states which possessed pre-existing institutions and a coherent territorial tradition prior to Soviet rule, and those which did not.[1743] It is often taken for granted that *territoriality*, "[the] geographical expression of social power", is uniform in its expression in all polities.[1744]

As shown in the descriptions of the *Steppe Tradition*, this is not always the case. Rather, politics on the Steppe is expressed in "a supple political order and a salient political culture", bereft of any ties to geography and manifest in the *Nomas* and *Politconymical* forms of social organisation.[1745] When the *Steppe Tradition* comes in contact with a *Sedentary* polity, the effect is *Hybridization* – the temporary adoption of a "middle ground" between the extremes offered by such a taxonomy.[1746] As the *Nomas* is antithetical to the *Polis* and its identification with an "ethnoscape", the effect of *hybridization* is the *deterritorialization* of the Nation State.[1747] The analysis of Russian institutions offered in this paper has shown that, despite the influence of European sedentary political traditions, Russia has retained trappings of *Steppe Tradition*. Such has implications for both the modern Russian Federation and Kazakhstan - the most "steppe" of the Central Asian Republics. Both should now be addressed.

If the Ukrainian Elite had sought to solidify their positions by severing ties with the centre whilst maintaining the institutions, than the Kazakh Elite, represented by Nursultan Nazarbayev alone, had sought to do the opposite. In the weeks and months following the August Coup, Nazarbayev had made a concerted effort to formalize economic relations

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[1742] (Garthoff, 1994, p. 278)
[1743] (Schnell, 2015, p. 224)
[1744] (Sack, 1983, p. 55)
[1745] (Miller, 2024, p. 98)
[1746] (Di Cosmo, 1999, p. 33)
[1747] (Smith, 1997, p. 36)

amongst the diverging Republics.[1748] Having gained his position through selection rather than election, Nazarbayev was woefully dependent on the *Yarliq* of the Supreme Soviet.[1749] Nonetheless, Nazarbayev used the powers he had from the Soviet legacy to call an unexpected and consequently un-opposed election, in which he won 98% of the vote and a plausible democratic mandate.[1750]

With his rule secure as President of the Kazakh SSR, Nazarbayev embarked on an institutional overhaul. In a tragic irony for the citizens of Kazakhstan, the resulting transformation of the country was "actually precisely in line with the Kazakh rulers of old" in its function and form.[1751] Work on the constitution began even before Kazakhstan gained its independence.[1752] Nazarbayev knew well the territorial incoherence that a dissolution of the Union would bring, and thus moved to quickly solidify Kazakhstan as a geopolitical reality.[1753] Kazakhstan was transformed into a unitary state – a marked departure from the federalism of the Soviet period.[1754] The capital, like the *Nomas* of old, was also relocated northward in order to project power and draw Kazakhs into the disputed borderlands between the emergent Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.[1755] The ideological refuse of the Soviet System – the collective farm – was abolished. Despite this, Land itself remained the "exclusive purview of the State" – a state of affairs that remains to this day.[1756]

Yet whilst Nazarbayev abandoned most tenets of Soviet ideology, he kept the parts that were consistent with the continuation of the nascent Kazakh state. A key example of this is *Eurasianism*, which was embraced and promoted by the newly independent Kazakhstan even whilst other Post-Soviet States, such as Uzbekistan, sought to abandon their previous affiliations and forge ahead in isolation.[1757] As theorised by Nomerovchenko et al. "a

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[1748] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 162)
[1749] (Imber, 2002, p. 13)
[1750] (Lillis, 2019, p. 10)
[1751] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 204)
[1752] (Anderson, 1997, p. 302)
[1753] (Lillis, 2019, p. 11)
[1754] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 204)
[1755] (Diener, 2002, p. 644)
[1756] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 235)
[1757] (Immamova, et al., 2021)

newly independent nation-state's foreign policy behaviour that aims to promote both domestic and international goals will hinge upon its national identity".[1758] This Constructivist view is enlightening insofar as Post-Soviet states are concerned.

Uzbekistan, with its historical basis in the *sedentary* city-states of Transoxiana, was able to unify around an ethnically and religiously homogenous identity.[1759] Thus, under Uzbekistan's first Post-soviet leader, Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan underwent a *Neo-Timurid* cultural revival, taking an openly antagonistic position towards the Tsarist and Soviet past and emphasising and Islamic and Uzbek future.[1760] Such was manifest in its aggressive posture towards present Russian suzerainty, pursuing close ties with the United States (until such ties were cut following the Andijan Massacre of 2005).[1761] Uzbekistan's *Neo-Timuridism* has impacted its relations with other Central Asian States, which were often marked by hostile posturing and obstruction on Tashkent's part.[1762]

Taking Uzbekistan as one extreme, Kazakhtan provides the alternative. Owing to Kazakhstan's extremely heterogenous population, paradoxical attempts at *Kazakhization* post-independence – much like the *Petrine Reforms* of Imperial Russia – proved dangerously unsuccessful.[1763] Kazakhstan was thus forced to emphasise the *Steppe Tradition* and embrace "a civic form of national identity that incorporated all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan".[1764] Through such a transformation, Kazakhstan was able to stabilise its internal political climate whilst positioning itself as a bridge between Russia and the wider Islamic and Turkic world.[1765] In Eurasianism, Kazakhstan found its *raison d'etre*, but it also found a willing partner in the *reimperializing* Russian Federation.[1766]

The exact causes of Russian reimperialization have already been indicated earlier in this paper, but it is worth expanding upon them briefly here. The most important matter of

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[1758] (Nomerovchenko, et al., 2018, p. 392)
[1759] (Khalid, 2021, p. 13)
[1760] (Juraev & Tursunbai, 2002, p. 3)
[1761] (Cornell, 2007, p. 287)
[1762] (Keller, 2019, p. 213)
[1763] (Melvin, 1993, p. 208)
[1764] (Nomerovchenko, et al., 2018, p. 398)
[1765] (Lillis, 2019, p. 13)
[1766] (Laurelle, 2008, p. 183)

consideration is that Russia itself emerged in the *Post-Imperium* of the Golden Horde.[1767] Whilst Muscovy fashioned itself as a Byzantine-Orthodox State, it claimed the *Yarliq* of the Tatary from which it was born, and thus emerged as a *hybridized dynastic polity* with a territorial claim over the entirety of the *Tatary*.[1768] The subsequent Russian conquest of the Steppe and Russia's emergence as a Great European Power did little to change the conception of Russia as a *dynastic* state rather than a *nation* state.[1769] The organisation of Russian power likewise continued to be concentric and radial rather than peripheral.[1770]

The arrival of modernity to the Russian lands did little to change this status quo. On the contrary, Russia transformed from a *dynastic* state organised around the Golden Kin of the Romanov Dynasty into a *collegial* state organised around the Communist Party and its ruling ideology.[1771] Ideology did play a role in *sedentizing* the formerly nomadic periphery – and the Steppe was organised into cohesive national units (with the minor exception of Kazakhstan, which was impacted severely by the demographic engineering of Soviet Rule).[1772] Nonetheless, the Russian territory itself remained a melting pot with no cohesive sense of territoriality – a factor that would come to play a major role in the breakdown of the Soviet Empire.[1773] Unlike the other nation states of Eurasia, Russia was unable to nationalize – it was unable to become a normal country. There were, nonetheless, attempts to do so – the emergent identity of *European Russians* or the *Siberians* is a good example of such. The latter should be briefly explored.

As the Russian Tsardom expanded across the Ural Mountains and into Asia in the 19th Century, they sowed the seeds of a unique Siberian ethnogenesis.[1774] Those who went east were united by three commonalities; they were almost uniformly men, they were freely migrating eastward, and they were doing so search of wealth in the fur trade, and to avoid the centralising tendencies of Moscow.[1775] The particular social and political dynamics of

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[1767] (Favereau, 2021, p. 13)
[1768] (Christian, 1992, p. 193)
[1769] (Khalid, 2021, p. 17)
[1770] (Wolters, 2018, p. 27)
[1771] (Khalid, 2021, p. 633)
[1772] (Hartwell, 2023, p. 236)
[1773] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 414)
[1774] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 73)
[1775] (Slezkine, 1994, p. 130)

the settlers led to many "going native",[1776] maintaining nominal Orthodox Rites and loyalty to the metropole whilst "abiding in Tartar Tents".[1777] These Russians came to be referred to as the *старожилы* (*Starožily* – "old settlers") – a dualistic term that maintained the "Russian-ness" of the settlers whilst securitizing them as those who had "lost sight of the project of state importance".[1778]

Part of that creolization process, as in the case of the Cossacks, was the development of a unique *ethnolect[1779]* – such being the "ultimate proof of nativisation".[1780] This *Siberian Language* has remained an object of contention for Russians, who maintain that *Siberian* is merely a dialect of Russian, and Siberia merely a region.[1781] Nonetheless, *Siberians* have continued to maintain themselves as something separate from Russia proper – the reactions arrival of a new wave of Russian settlers and the array of modernisation programs in the early 19th Century are a historical testament to that.[1782]

Scholars such as Nikolai Yadrintsev wrote patriotic treatises such as *Siberia as a Colony*; decrying the oppressive centralising policies of the metropole and viewing the struggle for independence as akin to that of the United States.[1783] With the opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1891, the issue was further inflamed by new Russian immigrants. As a result, Siberian *regionalists* began to use wholly *nationalist* language – seeing their burden as shared with similar movements in Russian-Poland and Ukraine.[1784] By the time of the October Revolution of 1917, Siberians had organised enough to declare their sovereignty in opposition to "Russia".[1785] This did not last; Siberia was reconquered by the Red Army, and what little unity that remained was sufficiently frustrated by the Bolshevik ethnic policies.[1786]

[1776] (Sunderland, 1996, p. 813)
[1777] (Collins, 1999, p. 15)
[1778] (Schweiter, et al., 2005, p. 135)
[1779] Per (Stewart, 2007, p. 3); A speech *variety* associated with an ethnic group – avoiding the politicization of the term "language".
[1780] (Sunderland, 1996, p. 815)
[1781] (Slezkine, 1994)
[1782] (Schweiter, et al., 2005, p. 140)
[1783] (Watrous, 1993, p. 116)
[1784] (Watrous, 1993, p. 121)
[1785] (Sushko, 2009, p. 174)
[1786] (Watrous, 1993, p. 125)

Thus, *Siberian* Independence emerged once again in the Gorbachev era. Spurred on by economic grievances and the post-Soviet restructuring, the White and Green banner of an independent Siberia once again flew in towns such as Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk.[1787] The result was the *Siberian Agreement* – an agreement creating a "proto-government" and granting significant political and administrative concessions to the territory; limiting tax revenue outflow to 20% of the local budget.[1788] The agreement lasted less than 9 months, however, becoming one of the many casualties of Russian Recentralization – manifest in the 1993 Anti-Parliamentary Coup.[1789] Since then, Siberian "autonomy"[1790] has continued to be a relevant issue in Russian politics;[1791] on one hand a bogeyman, and on the other, the manifestation of a geopolitical reality paved over by autocracy.[1792]

The Siberians are notable because they represent just one of many crisis of fragmentation that the Russian state had to. Yet upon independence from the Soviet Union, the nascent Russian State had to renegotiate its territorial integrity with every single ASSR, AO and AOB.[1793] The lifesaving means by which Russia achieved the upper hand was its significant hydrocarbon industry, which provided for the shift from an *extensive* economy to an *intensive* economy and ultimately – Russia's return from the Post-Soviet Crisis.[1794] By the end of the 1990s, Russia had solidified its dominance in Inner Eurasia, securing the loyalty of its former client regimes through value chains in the form of remittances.[1795] The extent to which such has a stabilising effect on Central Asia is manifest in the immense proportion of the GDP of Central Asian States occupied by such inflows.

Yet in providing for the inflow of labour and outflow of remittences, Russia finds itself in a demographic bind. Russia's demographics are not entirely "Russian". The country is

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[1787] (Ginsburgs & Smolansky, 1993, p. 75)
[1788] (Hughes, 1994, p. 1151)
[1789] (Dench, 1993)
[1790] Autonomy here encompasses both independence and regionalist movements.
[1791] See for example, Nivalny's appeals to Siberia (Luhn, 2014) or the attempt at standardisation of the "Siberian Language" (Zolotaryov, 2007).
[1792] (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2005, p. 163)
[1793] (Smele, 2015, p. 113)
[1794] (Christian, 1988, p. 1211)
[1795] (Jardine, et al., 2021)

inhabited by numerous indigenous peoples. The most prominent of these are the Turkic Peoples of Siberia (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chuvash etc.) who together form almost 10% of the total population, and the various Caucasian Peoples (Chechens, Avars, Dargins etc.) who form another 10%.[1796] Consequently, just 71% of Russia's 147 million *citizens* are ethnic Russians – a number that doesn't account for the 6 million "illegal" Central Asian migrants residing in the country.[1797] Whilst the outbreak of the war in Ukraine has prompted emigration out of Russia (a portion of which was Central Asians returning to their countries of origin),[1798] a plurality of the emigres were *bourgeoise* ethnic Russians.[1799]

There is some irony in this – having denied Central Asians the ability to become financially viable members of Society, the Kremlin consequently denied Central Asians the ability to leave.[1800] As a result, *when Moscow bleeds, it bleeds Russians*; and even prior to the war, the ethnic Russian population was projected to fall to 60% by 2030.[1801] As it stands, the Russian population already constitutes a minority in 12 of Russia's 21 Ethnic Republics.[1802] In the words of Russian Demographic Researcher Igor Beloborodov;

> "when the population drops from 140 to 70–80 million people… 85–90% of this decline will be among Russians… it will be impossible to maintain the country's territory. *Depopulation provokes decay.*"[1803]

Whilst it may be tempting to point to Auguste Comte's famous aphorism that "demographics is destiny",[1804] the historical durability of Empires, particularly hybridized empires such as the Ottoman Empire, suggest that *minoritarian* rule is not necessarily doomed to fail – and particularly not in the case of autocracies.[1805] Yet whereas the Ottoman Turkic elite was able to fashion a Nation State from the predominantly Turkic

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[1796] (Kremlin Archives, 2022)
[1797] (Kremlin Archives, 2022)
[1798] (Kurbanov, 2023)
[1799] (Kantchev, et al., 2022)
[1800] (Súilleabháin, 2013)
[1801] (Beloborodov, 2010)
[1802] (Figes, 2022, p. 11)
[1803] (Beloborodov, 2010)
[1804] Allgedly, see (Weeks, 2013).
[1805] See (Brown, 1993, p. 67)

Anatolian Steppe, the same cannot be expected of Russia – at least not without some major territorial adjustments. For the Russian Elite, Empire is the easier choice.

It is here that a major geopolitical imperative begins to take shape that has some explanatory value for the outbreak of the War in Ukraine. Already, there has been many attempts to do so – the Realist tradition has been thoroughly represented by John Mearshimer's advocating for "respecting Russia's sphere of influence".[1806] Likewise, Liberal scholars have highlighted the fact that Ukraine's transition into a European Democracy (and away from a comparatively influenceable Cossack aristocracy) has the potential to threaten democratization in Russia.[1807] Finally, there exists Constructivist discourse on Ukraine's place within the Great Russian Nation and how such pressures manifest on Vladimir Putin's dreams of Petrine greatness.[1808]

It is the position of this paper that the answer lies somewhere between all three – with some exceptions made, of course. The horror of the 1990s confronted Russia with an immense identity crisis. The unnatural borders that the Russian Federation came to inhabit, complete with their dysfunctional post-soviet demographics, led to a loss of confidence as articulated by Zbigniew Brzezinski; "Where is Russia?" and moreover, "What is Russia?".[1809] Three decades later, the answer is clearer. Whilst Alexander Motyl's original prediction saw Russia emerge as either a "normal country" or a weakened empire, the contingencies of the Post-Soviet system on the Eurasian Steppe show that a third option existed.[1810] Rather than coalescing around a territorial core (as in the case of post-Habsburg Austria), Russia pushed through a period of territorial incoherence and, armed with revenues from its hydrocarbon industry, established a supple imperial order over the Post-Soviet Space.[1811]

For some time, Russia's economic and military strength vis-à-vis the Central Asian Republics made it the partner of choice for the Central Asian autocrat. Such a status quo

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[1806] (Cooley, 2017)
[1807] (Hartwell, 2016, p. 216)
[1808] (Shkandrij, 2001, p. 11)
[1809] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 96)
[1810] (Motyl, 1999, p. 127)
[1811] (Khalid, 2021, p. 615)

was not going to last forever – particularly not with Russia's declining demographics. Russia's relative decline vis-à-vis more attractive options such as China or India would, in time, erode Russian dominance over the region.[1812] Internally, Russia's demographic decline would bring into question the "Russian" nature of the state – a matter that would be able to be seized upon by Russian ethnonationalists such as Alexi Navalni.[1813] Such factors would be compounded by the collapse of the Russian hydrocarbons industry as a result of such demographic changes.[1814]

Should such come to pass, Moscow would lose its influence over Central Asia. Yet Russian decline would not stop there – it would proceed into Russia proper. The numerous republics of the Russian Federation, possessing salient territorial traditions, would seek independence from Moscow in time. Ethnic Russians, increasingly outnumbered by their non-Russian compatriots, would be in no position to preserve the territorial integrity of the country. It would be a return to the Time of Troubles *in miniature* of the 1990s – and Russia would lack the ability to leverage its Post-Cold War military largesse or its Hydrocarbon industry.[1815] In annexing or otherwise subjugating Ukraine, Russia seizes the rich Chernozem it needs for an autarkic demographic revival as well as the historical justification for its existence. Per Brzezinski in *The Grand Chessboard* 1997:

> "…Even without the Baltic states and Poland, a Russia that retained control over Ukraine could still seek to be the leader of an assertive Eurasian empire, in which Moscow could dominate the non-Slavs in the South and Southeast of the former Soviet Union. But without Ukraine and its 52 million fellow Slavs, any attempt by Moscow to rebuild the Eurasian empire was likely to leave Russia entangled alone in protracted conflicts with the nationally and religiously aroused non-Slavs, the war with Chechnya perhaps simply being the first example…"[1816]

Thus, whilst Brzezinski accurately articulated the means by which Russia could solve its crisis of identity, *The Steppe Tradition* perhaps provides the origins of such.

[1812] (Mirovalev, 2022)
[1813] (Kollman, 2017, p. 213)
[1814] (Christian, 1988, p. 1160)
[1815] (Figes, 2022, p. 275)
[1816] (Brzezinsky, 1997, p. 92)

Conclusion: The Beylik of Russia

"*Russia's border doesn't end anywhere.*"

Vladimir Putin[1817]

In July 2021, I penned a monograph for the Geopolitical Magazine *Caspian Report* entitled *Why Russia Wants to Restore Soviet Borders*. The monograph was written in response to an increasingly tense situation in Ukraine, and demonstrated a Realist Analysis of Russia's post-Soviet dilemma – focusing on the geopolitical challenges presented by the Great European Plain and Post-Soviet Central Asia. Three years later, this work (however incomplete in its analysis) hopes to provide an alternative form of analysis.

The *Steppe Tradition* offers such a form of analysis, and can be readily applied to Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and its motivations. Through examining state formation on the Steppe, this thesis has provided an explanation for why Russia was not able to become a "normal country" following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The causes of Russia's *reimperialization* were found in its inability to form a coherent territorial tradition and an associated national identity – two staples of a tradition of rule that emerged out of the Steppe.

This thesis began by explaining the general development of Geopolitics and International Relations as a school of political science. Having introduced a series of schools of thought, the thesis proceeded with an analysis of Empire and State Formation. Over the course of the analysis, an Empire was defined in institutionalist terms as being a form of heterogenous interstate contracting. The work of John Gerring et al. on the preservation of pre-existing institutions was illustrative of Francis Fukuyama's conception of institutions as being "sticky". Thus Empire was understood as a political order that incorporates pre-existing institutional orders or builds them where such does not exist prior.

Alexander Motyl's work on the breakdown and re-emergence of Empires, then, became the basis of the hypothesis. Motyl's work provided a series of conditions by which Empires could "reimperialize" – along with an argument that the Soviet Empire would not be able

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[1817] (BBC World News, 2016)

to after the 1990s. The fact that the Russian Federation was able to strengthen its position since the turn of the millennium was taken as the core subject of analysis. The experiences of Russia's abnormal recovery of its Empire was contrasted with the Habsburg domain, which collapsed into its national components. It was demonstrated that, lacking a coherent post-imperial identity, Austria was able to leverage its territorial traditions in order to create a *Staatsnation* from which a *Nationstaat* could be derived. A test was formulated by which Russia's inability to do the same was a result of its lacking of a territorial tradition.

In search of Russia's missing territorial tradition, the Eurasian Steppe was analysed. Whilst other works which have attempted to explain Russian imperial nature have fixated on "The Tatar Yoke", this thesis attempted to refrain from such historical simplifications. The concept of *Oriental Despotism* was discarded in favour of a theory that based the emergence of the *Steppe Tradition* not in biological or cultural factors, but in the contingencies of state formation on the Steppe. The nature of the Steppe, with its wide geography and harsh climate, presents Steppe societies with a series of challenges that are often confronted through similar means.

Previous works on the Eurasian Steppe, particularly those by Bryan K. Miller and Peter Golden, provided a detailed account of how the earliest Steppe Empires formed and functioned in spite of such challenges. For this purpose, Nicola Di Cosmo's work on *Crisis, Militarization and Centralization* was adopted as hypothetical model, and tested upon three geographically distinct peripheral societies – namely, the Steppe, the sedentary societies of the Southern Cape of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The presence of identifiable traits shared in common between all three contexts provided an "ideal form" of the *Steppe Tradition*, which was observable in the *Hybridized* polities of the Hungarians and Ottomans.

From this basis, the development of the Russian State was examined. Chapter 4.1 to 4.4 demonstrated the divergence between Muscovy and the other Rus' principalities as a result of the former's interaction with the Steppe. Thus, these chapters focused on the institution of Feudalism in the early Rus' and the introduction of the *Suyurqal* and other institutions of Steppe rule to the later Muscovite State. The influence of Byzantine Law and clerical justifications for caesaropapism were considered and distinguished from the Muscovite

state in turn. Chapter 4.4 thus ended by demonstrating the Tsardom of Russia was part of the Post-Imperial Order of the Golden Horde.

Chapters 4.5 charted Russia's expansion across the Steppe, demonstrating a retrenchment in the Steppe tradition even whilst the Empire looked westward and embarked on a series of *Europeanizing* reforms under Peter the Great. Like Kazakhstan's later experiences in Kazakhization, Russia's attempt to move away from a *Dynastic* model to a *National* model of Empire resulted in disaster. Chapter 4.6 charted the rise of social tensions as a result of the arrival of modernity to the Steppe. The subjective experiences of Russia as a European Empire prompted the need for reforms that were incompatible with the Steppe Tradition. The Romanov Dynasty's subsequent move towards economic and political modernization resulted in disaster, unleashing a crisis upon the Steppe.

In Chapters 4.7 and 4.9b, the process of *Crisis, Militarization and Centralization* was observed in the foundation of the Soviet Union. The exact means by which the Soviet Union readopted the Steppe Tradition was demonstrated in two distinct phenomena. The first of these was the emergence of a common "Russian Idea" – a set of presumptions shared by the Reds and Whites that centred on Eurasianism, redistributive economics and patrimonial rule. The second of such phenomena was the reincorporation of former Tsarist officials and the co-opting of pre-existing Tsarist institutions for Soviet ends. Thus, the Russian Revolution was seen as a transition, but not a break, in the Steppe Tradition.

Chapter 4.9a preceded 4.9b due to chronological constraints. Nonetheless, the focus of Chapter 4.9a was the potency of pre-existing institutions and a territorial tradition in advancing national independence. The emergent states of the "Intermarium" were compared in their pre- and post-independence. The Baltic States were found to possess a coherent national identity and concrete territorial tradition – factors not observable in the examples of Poland or Ukraine. The trajectory of Poland and Ukraine in the interwar was compared in turn, with Poland's subsequent institutional and identarian consolidation posited as a factor for its success vis-à-vis the *many* Ukraines. Ukraine-proper's incoherent territorial tradition was once again provided as evidence of its pre-existence as a Steppe Polity during the 17th Century period of the Cossack Hetmanante.

Chapters 4.10 and 4.11 carried through the analysis of the Soviet Union as a *Hybridized Polity*, with a particular focus on the breakdown of the institutions of Steppe Empires identified in previous chapters. The Soviet Union once again ran into issues of modernization and found itself increasingly unable to compete with the western economies. The subsequent Era of Stagnation under Brezhnev saw the systems of patrimonialism remain in place even whilst the Empire began to lag behind its geopolitical competitors. Attempts to overturn such institutions of Soviet Imperial Rule, as in the case of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, undermined the very networks that held the Empire together.

The emergence of nationalism amongst the Russian subjects of the Empire led to a paradoxical move towards national independence without a coherent territorial tradition. Whereas Austria had been able to ground itself in its alpine geography and catholic traditions, Russian nationalists were immediately confronted with the incoherence of the Russian geography and identity. The consequence of both trends was a reversion to Russian Imperialism and a move towards re-imperialization. Such trends occurred contemporaneously and in conjunction with other Eurasianist projects – such as that of Nursultan Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan.

Emerging from its first decade of Independence intact, the Russian Federation was able to exploit its hydrocarbon reserves to maintain economic and military superiority relative to the Post-Soviet States of Central Asia. Such provided for the emergence of the system of remittances and an internal system of labour migration that contributed significantly to the GDP of Central Asian states. Russia's relationship with the *Steppe Republics* was thus compared to the system of patronage and patrimonialism common to Steppe polities since the time of the Xiong-nu.

In line with Motyl's later predictions of "Creeping Reimperialization", the period of Russian re-emergence in the 2000s saw Russia consolidate its position in Central Asia as the "First Among Equals". The emergence of alternative sources of revenue, as well as Russia's declining demographics, presented a serious geopolitical threat to Russia's dominance on the Steppe. Russia's invasion of Ukraine is thus identified as being congruent with Russia's need to maintain the Steppe Cycle of patronage – an imperative identified as early as Zbigniew Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard.*

Summary

This thesis seeks to examine Empire and its ends. Examining with the theories advanced by Alexander Motyl in *Imperial Ends*, this thesis applies the imperial parabola to a type of empire often neglected in political discourse – the Steppe Empire.

Beginning with an analysis of the geopolitical conditions of the Eurasian Steppe, this thesis proceeds to chart the institutional development of Steppe Empires vis-à-vis Sedentary Empires such as those embodied by the Habsburg Dynasty. In examining Steppe Empires, the *Steppe Tradition* of Iver B. Neumann and Einar Wigan is applied.

In analysing the impact of the Eurasian Steppe and the *Steppe Tradition* of State Development on peripheral states, this thesis follows the institutional development of the Russian State. Through a thorough analysis, it can be demonstrated that the Russian state *Hybridized* under the influence of the *Steppe Tradition*, and that such hybrid institutions carried over into the Soviet Period.

The impact of the *Steppe Tradition* on the Russian State is manifest in its lack of a territorial tradition – an "ethnoscape" in the words of Anthony D. Smith. Likewise, systems such as the predations of *Kormlenie* and the system of patrimonial rule in Russia can both be understood as remnants of the *Steppe Tradition*

In conclusion, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is understood as a means of perpetuating Russian dominance in Central Asia – a means and an end that has its analogy in the *Steppe Tradition*.

Resumé

Tato práce se snaží prozkoumat impérium a jeho povahu. Na základě teorií, které v knize Imperial Ends předložil Alexander Motyl, tato práce aplikuje císařskou parabolu na typ impéria, který je v politickém diskurzu často opomíjen - na stepní říši.

Tato práce začíná analýzou geopolitických podmínek euroasijské stepi a pokračuje mapováním institucionálního vývoje stepních říší vůči říším sedentárním, jaké ztělesňovala například habsburská dynastie. Při zkoumání stepních říší se uplatňuje stepní tradice Ivera B. Neumanna a Einara Wigana.

Při analýze vlivu euroasijské stepi a stepní tradice vývoje státu na periferní státy sleduje tato práce institucionální vývoj ruského státu. Na základě důkladné analýzy lze prokázat, že ruský stát se pod vlivem stepní tradice hybridizoval a že tyto hybridní instituce se přenesly i do sovětského období.

Vliv stepní tradice na ruský stát se projevuje v tom, že v něm chybí teritoriální tradice - slovy Anthonyho D. Smithe „etnoscape". Stejně tak systémy, jako je dravé "kormlenie" a systém patrimoniální vlády v Rusku, lze chápat jako pozůstatky stepní Tradice

Závěrem lze říci, že ruská invaze na Ukrajinu je chápána jako prostředek k udržení ruské nadvlády ve Střední Asii - prostředek a cíl, který má svou analogii ve stepní tradici.

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