STRUGGLES OVER THE EURASIAN BORDERLANDS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR[1]

BORBE ZA EURAZIJSKE POGRANIČNE ZEMLJE I KORIJENI HLADNOGA RATA

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Sažetak

Ovaj članak, predstavlja nov geokulturni kontekst za istraživanje međuodnosa između pet multikulturnih carstava, Habsburškog, Ruskog, Otomanskog, Itanskog i Kineskog, od 16. do ranog 20. stoljeća i njihove imperijalne vlasti u 20. stoljeću. Članak također obuhvaća analizu razloga za Hladni rat kao osnovu borbi za formiranje granica euroazijskih pograničnih zemalja.

In the waning days of World War II the Grand Alliance, never very solid to begin with, began to crumble under the weight of a succession of crises that erupted all along the periphery of the Soviet Union from the Baltic to the Pacific. Beginning in Poland and Romania, developing in the Balkans and Central Europe, spreading to the Middle East and the Far East, each successive crisis increased tensions among the erstwhile wartime allies in a mounting spiral of hostility that acquired a momentum of its own. The outbreak of a hot

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war in the Korean Peninsula and the death of Stalin in 1953 marked the opening of a new phase when the Cold War became truly global.

Since the term Cold War was first coined, most observers have located the opening salvos somewhere in the period between the euphoria of the Yalta conference in February 1945 and the harsh rhetoric of Stalin's election speech, George Kennan's "Long Telegram" and Churchill's Iron Curtain speech almost exactly a year later. The more historically minded sought its origins earlier, even as far back as Wilson's and Lenin's competing visions of a future world order that emerged from the wreckage of the First World War. Whatever the chronology, there was general agreement on causes, although not on responsibility. Ideology and great power rivalry were the two dimensions along which historians plotted their narratives. But they apportioned blame, or guilt, or weakness, or naivete, or stupidity or confusion differently to different players. And most of the time the players were limited to a handful, the Big Three and a few advisors who assumed over time an iconic significance, enshrined in wartime conferences ritualistically seated in a row or around a circular table. They dominated the great set pieces: the summit conferences where esoteric code names mounted guard over secret diplomacy.

Among the most evocative icons of World War II are the posed photographs of the Big Three at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam. Laden with symbolic and hermeneutic meaning they are emblematic of the Grand Alliance that already bears the seeds of its own dissolution. The trio of leaders - first Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin and then Churchill, Truman and Stalin - represent the power and the ideologies that underlay the dominant narratives of the origins of the Cold War. They also personify these sources of conflict in an almost theatrical fashion. The American president always occupies center stage flanked by Churchill on his right and Stalin on his left. By the time of Yalta Roosevelt, formerly "the happy warrior" has become world-weary and ailing, wrapped in the cloak of an aged Hamlet. At Potsdam the new American leader, President Harry Truman exudes robust health and confidence, bolstered by knowledge of the success of the atomic bomb; dressed in a well-pressed business suit he resembles nothing so much as an American business tycoon. Stalin at Yalta dressed in the field uniform of a Russian marshal has survived the early defeats and confidently anticipates a victory; at Potsdam he is at the height of his international influence, resplendent in his white military jacket; he exudes charm but his ultimate aims remain inscrutable. At Yalta, Churchill, dogged but already overshadowed by the rise of his allies to super-power status, slouches in his rumpled air marshal's uniform. In the midst of the Potsdam Conference he is defeated at the polls and yields his seat at the negotiating table to the colorless Clement Attlee, a lesser icon in the photographic gallery, backed by a pugnacious Ernest Bevan as Foreign Minister. Personalities then must be added to geo-politics and ideology in order to complete the triad upon which most interpretations of the Cold War rest. These same photographs also set the traditional temporal context of Cold War histories, capturing a few moments in time when one era ends and another begins, when alliance passes into antagonism.

Without denying the importance of the role of ideology, geopolitics and leadership in dividing the Big Three, this essay seeks to enlarge the temporal and spatial context of the Cold War. As a multidimensional approach to the origins of the Cold War, my approach seeks

to supplement rather than supplant the traditional two-dimensional interpretations that are built around great power politics and ideological combat. I propose to add a temporal-spatial or third dimension and a socio-cultural or fourth dimension to the analysis.

The temporal-spatial or third dimension interprets the crises of the mid-twentieth century as an episode in a prolonged struggle for domination over the Eurasian borderlands, a struggle that stretched over four centuries. Up to 1914 the major competing state systems were multicultural bureaucratic empires - the Russian, Habsburg, Ottoman, Iranian and Chinese; they engaged one another in military, diplomatic and cultural competition to gain control over the vast territories inhabited by a great variety of peoples that separated their cultural core lands from one another. These contested territories constitute what I define as the Eurasian borderlands.

Mapping the Eurasian borderlands goes beyond a cartographer's skill. The term is used here as a way of describing a historical process that combines elements of symbolic, human and physical geography. It is symbolic in the sense of representing a imagined space embedded in collective memories and myths; it is human in the sense of representing the changing locations of a great variety of cultural communities caught up in the vast population movements -migrations, colonization, deportations - that characterized the demography of the contested territories; it is physical in terms of the great variety of topographical zones, forest, steppe, desert, river valleys, mountains where that shaped and were shaped by human agency. The concept of Eurasian borderlands also serves a historiographical as well as methodological purpose. It stands in opposition to two overly determinist explanations of the changes it seeks to explain in general and the origins of the Cold War in particular. To encapsulate them, they are the geopolitical and the civilizational, endowing geography and culture respectively with essentialist characteristics [2].

This concept of the Eurasian borderlands has been inspired by the work of Owen Lattimore and the French historical geographers beginning with Vidal de la Blache, continuing with Lucien Febvre and culminating in Fernand Braudel.[3] As Febvre pointed out,

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[2] For reviews of the geopolitical school see W.H. Parker, MacKinder , Geography as an Aid to Statecraft (Oxford, 1982) and Ladis Kristoff, "The Origins and Evolution of Geopolitics," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 4:1 (1960) 30-5. For a recent attempt to apply these ideas to the Russian case, John P. LeDonne, The Russian Empire and the World, 1700-1917. The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment (New York, 1997). For a powerful critique, Lucien Febvre, La Terre et l'evolution humaine (Paris, 1922), especially chapter 1.The civilization school stems from both a Russian and German tradition. Nikolai Danilevsky, Rossiia i Evropa and Oswald Spengler, Der Untergang des Westens (translated and abridged as The Decline of the West. The Russian tradition was continued by emigre scholars under the rubric of Eurasianism. The classic treatment of original school remains Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "The Emergence of Eurasianism," California Slavic Studies, 4 (1967). A recent translation of the key text, "Iskhod k vostoku" by the four founders, N.S. Trubetskoi, P.N. Savitskii, P.P. Suvchinskii and G.V. Florovskii is Ilya Vinkovetsky and Charles Schlacks, Jr. (eds.) Exodus to the East: Forebodings and Events: An Affirmation of the Eurasians (Idyllwild CA., 1996). The post-Soviet revival of the school is given a critical analysis by Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Classical Eurasianism and Its Legacy," Canadian-American Slavic Studies, 34:2 (summer 2000), 125-140.

[3] My use of the concept differs from the view favored by a group of émigré Russian historians in the 1920s and recently revived in Russia that treats Eurasia as a unique civilization distinct from both Europe and Asia. The classic treatment of original school remains Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "The Emergence of Eurasianism," California Slavic Studies, 4 (1967). A recent translation of the key text, "Iskhod k vostoku" by the four founders, N.S. Trubetskoi, P.N. Savitskii, P.P. Suvchinskii and G.V. Florovskii is Ilya Vinkovetsky and Charles Schlacks, Jr. (eds.) Exodus to the East: Forebodings and Events: An Affirmation of the Eurasians (Idyllwild CA., 1996. The post-Soviet revival of the school is given a critical analysis by Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Classical Eurasianism and Its Legacy," Canadian-American Slavic Studies, 34:2 (summer 2000), 125-140.

climate, soil, the contours of the land, the abundance or lack of navigable rivers, all present possibilities as well as imposing constraints on human endeavor. But none taken separately or all together explains historical development or the choice of one specific possibility over the others, to say nothing of the distribution and concentration of power. Rather, he suggested that there were "privileged places for the birth of viable political entities, regions that favor the growth of states." Among these he lists the lands adjacent to the steppes of Eurasia along the edges of different large-scale natural zones. But even in the case of "privileged places" he acknowledged that there were no natural frontiers, only those established by the actions of organized states, the rationalizing minds of rulers and their advisers, the contours of culture.[4] To put it another way, as the physical environment shapes and modifies social organization and cultural expression without determining them, so does purposeful human action shape and modify the environment without mastering it.

The topographical setting was shaped by the migration of peoples and the patterns of trade along two great routes leading from the Inner Asian plateau into the North German Plain and the mountains of the Balkan Peninsula. The northern route was the avenue of nomadic migrations and invasions sweeping from east to west from the beginning of the Christian era across the most extensive expanse of desert and grassland on the globe. To the south stretched the Silk Route and road of pilgrimage, "frail as a winding, drawn out line of ants moving cross country."[5] The southern route then traverses Anatolia. It changes its physical character dramatically as it passes across the narrow Straits into the Balkan Peninsula which the Serbian scholar Jovan Cvijić called "Euro-Asiatic."[6]

Moving from rather high level generalizations to concrete historical events, the process of forming a geo-cultural space called Eurasian borderlands occurred over two centuries between the mid-fifteenth and mid-seventeenth. It was the result of a seismic shift in the inter-relationship between the nomads and the sedentary peoples on the edge of the steppe lands. The nomadic states, based on the armed horseman and convex bow, gradually lost military supremacy they had maintained for two millennia to the rising power of multi-cultural, bureaucratic, empires like the Habsburg and Muscovite Russian. Or else victorious nomadic invaders transformed themselves into the ruling elites of the decaying sedentary empires that they had conquered, like the Ottomans in Byzantium, the Safavids in Iran, the Manchus in China. In the course of state building the bureaucratic empires expanded their frontiers, incorporating different ethno-linguistic groups and engaging in a prolonged struggle with one another for supremacy in the contested space that separated them - the Eurasian borderlands - which acquired their own peculiar cultural and social configuration.

The socio-cultural or fourth dimension relates to the process of incorporating and assimilating peoples of the borderlands, who manifest different ethno-linguistic and religious identities, into the body politic of the Eurasian multicultural states. The difficulties of this process may be gauged by a summary analysis of a demographic profile of the peoples of

[4] Paul Vidal de la Blache, Tableau de la géographie de la France, (Paris,1914) 1-7 and idem. Principles of Human Geography (translated by M.T. Bingham) (New York, 1926); André-Louis Sanguin, Vidal de la Blache. Une génie de la géographie (Paris, 1993), 327.

[5] Rene Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes. A History of Central Asia (New Brunswick, 1970), xxii.

[6] Jovan Cvijić, La peninsule balkanique (Paris, 1918), 12,157.

the borderlands. First, they inhabited what anthropologists call "shatter zones" that is areas inhabited by mixed ethnic, linguistic and religious groups periodically shaken up by wars, migrations, forced resettlement, colonization and conversions. In contrast to the western part of Europe where the Volkerwänderung had ended in the eleventh century and there were no large-scale deportations with the exception of the Huguenots in the early modern period, Eurasia was the scene of multiple mass population movements into the twentieth century. Second, the Eurasian borderlands were highly contested by imperial rivals in the course of long wars and state building that led to the subjugation of nomads or sedentary peoples with a previous state history. As a result loyalties and allegiances of the peoples of the borderlands were frequently in question especially in times of war and increasingly with the rise of national movements. Third, the imperial centers were obliged to develop special administrative, cultural and military policies with respect to the peoples of the borderlands in order to incorporate them into the body of the state. In the on-going process of bargaining that regulated the most basic relations between core and periphery repression alternated with compromise. Fourth, the peoples of the borderlands developed their own range of responses extending along a broad spectrum ranging on the one hand from the most violent forms of opposition like armed rebellion to the small deeds of every day resistance and on the other hand from total assimilation to pragmatic collaboration. The greater the difference between forms of resistance and collaboration, the greater the potential for conflict and civil war among the people of the borderlands. Fifth, a set of unusually complex social and political conditions arose at certain points along the moving, porous, military frontiers of the empires where three or more powers contended for domination. These complex frontiers were the sites where a cross-cultural contacts from "trading to raiding" gave rise to particular types of warrior communities - the Uskoks, Grenzers, Cossacks, Shia qizilbashi, Byzantine akinci, Mongol and Manchu bannermen - with their own way of life and traditions that made them highly volatile and especially difficult to assimilate. In short, the borderlands harbored a vast potential for violence and instability even though there were long periods of peaceful cultural interaction among its inhabitants and between the conquered people and their overlords. As a general rule, civility broke down mainly under the shock of war and the rise of radical ideologies both of which reached new levels of intensity in the Eurasian borderlands during the twentieth century.

Like the beginning of any vast and complex historical process the struggle over the Eurasian borderlands had no single spatial or temporal point of departure. Rather it emerged in different places at different times in a period stretching from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. A number of landmarks marking the opening phase of the struggle include the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the coming to power in Iran of the Safavid dynasty in 1501, the separation of the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs and the union of its hereditary lands with Hungary, Bohemia and Croatia in 1526-27, the conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan by Muscovy in 1553 and 1555, The Union of Brest by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1596 and the Manchu conquest of China in the 1640s. In Vienna, Warsaw and Moscow the foundations were laid for various "missions" in defense of Christianity. And among the Sunni Ottomans and the Shia Iranians in Constantinople and Isfahan similar

messianic goals were put forward. But these were not simple, clear-cut clashes of civilizations. The Russian-Polish rivalry and the Ottoman-Iranian were if anything even more fierce and uncompromising than those between Christians and Muslims. Qing (Manchu) China despite its contacts with both Islam in it northwest provinces and Christian Russians in the north was free of any religious ideology in its pursuit of power.

In locational terms, always keeping in mind the blurred and shifting nature of their frontiers, the Eurasian borderlands occupied an intermediate space between major concentrations of political power centered on Russian, Austro-German, Turkic, Iranian and Chinese (Han) culture areas. In the process of state building the new dynasties defeated and absorbed lesser rivals and competed with one another and the indigenous peoples for control of the intermediate space that separated their core areas. As the Ottoman, Safavid and Qing dynasts converted themselves and their states into multicultural bureaucratic empires, other nomadic people sought to maintain their independent existence either as free roaming tribes like the Nogai, Kalmyks and Bashkirs or as autonomous parts of a larger state like the Crimean Tatars or as a full fledged nomadic empire like the Oirat Mongols in Dzhungaria. At the same time, other contenders for state power like the Poles, Hungarians, Georgians to name but a few, lost out in the struggle and were long submerged into larger political units. From major players in the struggle they became borderlands of the empires that had conquered and absorbed them. For example a once powerful Hungarian state was overwhelmed by the Ottoman onslaught, lost its sovereignty and broke into three parts before being reconstituted under Habsburg rule at the end of the seventeenth century. The large Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, weakened by its prolonged struggle with the Russians and Ottomans for Ukraine, also lost its statehood and was partitioned by the Austrians, Russians and Prussians at the end of the eighteenth century. The ancient kingdom of Georgia was repeatedly conquered by Ottoman and Iranian armies before the Russians annexed it in 1801. The persistent problem faced by the elites of the conquered peoples was how to react to imperial rule: whether to resist or to accommodate and how to pursue either course of action. They remained profoundly divided over this question. They were haunted by the realization that they could only regain their independence as the result of intervention by an outside power or the collapse of the international system. Throughout the nineteenth century there were rebellions throughout the borderlands from Serbia to Xinjiang. But only in those regions where one or more great powers intervened against a weak imperial rule, did rebellion lead to autonomy or independence, and this was mainly in the Balkans but also in the early twentieth century in the northern tier of the Chinese borderlands.

When the more unlikely collapse of the international system occurred in the fateful decade between 1905 and 1925, most of the Eurasian borderlands broke away, some as in East Central and Southeastern Europe reestablishing their independence or reconstituting their states at the expense of other nationalities; others in Eastern Europe (Belorus and Ukraine), the Caucasus or Central Asia being reincorporated into new form of the multi-cultural, bureaucratic state, the Soviet Union. The newly independent enjoyed a precarious existence. For all their nominal independence they remained borderlands but now weighed down with the burdensome legacy of their imperial predecessors; saddled with mixed populations, often

of dubious loyalty, circumscribed by arbitrarily drawn frontiers and flanked by greater powers who threatened their territorial integrity or their very existence.

Under the threat of war or within the cauldron itself these mini-borderlands proved vulnerable to internal subversion or external attack. This was also the case with the reconstituted borderlands of the Soviet Union, Iran and China. Therein lay the seeds of a new phase in the struggle over the borderlands that developed in the waning days of World War II and into the postwar period.

Originally, the struggle over the Eurasian borderlands had been self-contained, that is it involved the continental states that shared common if mainly ill defined frontiers or competed for the same territories. By the nineteenth century external powers began to appear on the scene, first the British, then at the end of the century the newly constituted German and Japanese Empires and finally and rather suddenly in the mid-twentieth century the United States. By this time too, the relatively recent actors in the competition were promoting new, radical and competing ideologies, ranging from the Nazi racial state and the Japanese Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere to Soviet socialism and American style democratic capitalism, all aimed at transforming the socio-economic and political life of the peoples of the borderlands. But the geo-cultural landscape, the territories and peoples, the older belief systems and traditions within the borderlands had not been erased even if they too had undergone changes over the previous two centuries.

This is not to suggest a cyclical view of history or a mechanical pattern of history repeating itself. Rather, my thesis is that the multicultural empires of Eurasia and their twentieth century successors faced similar problems in securing their internal stability and external security arising from the complex relationship between core and periphery, between the hegemonic cultural center and the heterogeneous borderlands. This relationship was further complicated by the inter-state conflicts over the borderlands as objects of territorial expansion. Because of the particular social ecology of the borderlands, foreign and internal wars were often closely related, the one sparking the other. As a result the line between external and domestic policies were blurred.

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The struggle over the Eurasian borderlands may be seen as having passed through three major, overlapping phases: the imperial phase from the sixteenth century to the end of the multicultural empires in the second decade of the twentieth century; the contest of the flank powers and the Soviet Union from the early part of the twentieth century until the end of World War II in 1945; the period of the origins of the Cold War from 1944 to 1950. In the first phase the multicultural, bureaucratic empires - Habsburg, Russian, Ottoman, Iranian and Chinese - forged new administrative, financial and military institutions, encountered and challenged one another as imperial rivals. At the same time their prolonged conflict with the steppe entered its decisive phase in which the nomadic peoples are either subjugated or inherit by right of conquest the legacies of earlier empires and became the ruling dynasts. In the process of expansion, wars, forced migrations, resettlement and colonization further jumbled the ethnographic mix of populations, increased cultural complexity and created new forms of frontier societies at the margins of the borderlands.

During the first phase the struggle over the borderlands took place in a contested space which I have called complex frontiers. These complex frontiers manifested the following characteristics 1) They were zonal rather than linear boundaries, shifting rather than fixed where at least three imperial rivals, although not always the same set, competed for domination 2) They were strategically important areas where rugged landscapes challenged easy conquest and offered refuge for the defeated, the disaffected and the rebellious. 3) They continued to be the meeting grounds of nomads or semi-nomads with settled populations even after the historical reversal of power relationships steppe and sedentary societies. 4) They were inhabited by highly mixed ethno-linguistic and religious groups - as the result of both coercive and voluntary population movements including flight, deportation, colonization and resettlement - who interacted in cross border cultural and military encounters. 5) Both before and after their subjugation to imperial rule the populations of the complex frontiers displayed ambiguous loyalties toward super-ordinate authority, at least as long as they did not directly share in its power and privileges, thereby creating after their incorporation a series of internal frontiers that separated the imperial core from its periphery. 6) Confronted by the imagined and real threats to stability and security of the imperial order posed by the complex frontiers, the ruling elites employed a variety of policies oscillating between concessions and repression in order to win over or subdue the local populations.

Up until the mid-eighteenth century, the imperial rivals were more of less evenly matched. But under the reign of Catherine II, "the Great" the Russian Empire began to gain an edge in the struggle over the borderlands, particularly at the expense of the Ottoman and Iranian Empires, and later in the second half of the nineteenth century at the expense of China. The administrative, social and military reforms of Peter the Great laid the essential foundations for the success of Russia's ruling elites in mobilizing the human and material resources vital to conquest of the southern and south western borderlands in their contest with their imperial rivals. The outcome was still in doubt, however. The danger that his achievements would be reversed after his death did not dissipate until Catherine's reign. The destruction of Poland, expulsion of the Ottomans from the Pontic steppe, and in the early nineteenth century the defeat of Iran in the South Caucasus were so many milestones on the Russian advance. One key to its success was to borrow technology and stabilize its finances without falling into economic dependence upon Western Europe. In addition to its military victories, Russian expansion benefited more than any other power from colonization, the result of both official policy and spontaneous initiative, traditions rooted in the first phase of the struggle over the borderlands. But Russia was no more successful than the other empires in carrying out a thorough going assimilation, to say nothing of acculturation of the peoples of the borderlands. It did not pursue a consistent policy of russification or conversion to Orthodoxy; still less did the ruling elite embrace an over arching ideology of Pan-Slavism in the nineteenth century. Having won most of the contest with its external rivals over the borderlands, it did not secure the ties binding the center to the periphery. During the Crimean War the Russo-Japanese War and World War I defeat threatened a loss of territory on the periphery and finally the dissolution of the multicultural state. A similar threat surfaced again in the Soviet Union during World War II.

The Iranian, Ottoman and Chinese governments were even less successful than the Russian in developing and modernizing their central bureaucratic apparatus, army and imperial ideology. Unlike Russia, they became increasingly dependent on Western commercial and financial power. Their hold over their borderlands slackened as that of Russia increased. By the early twentieth century Russia's victory in its war with the Ottoman empire in 1878, which resulted in the creation of an autonomous Bulgaria, the penetration of the borderlands of Northern Iran (Azerbaizhan) and the partition of the country in 1907 with the British, and its growing influence in the borderlands constituting the northern tier of the Chinese Empire (Xinjiang, Mongolia and Manchuria), despite a temporary setback in the Russo-Japanese War, seriously undermined the authority of the imperial Qajar and Qing centers.

During the same period the Habsburg Monarchy steadily lost territory and influence on its western periphery: the French and Piedmontese drove the Austrians out of Lombardy; the Prussians excluded them from the German Confederation. In 1848 the Monarchy had come close to disintegrating under the hammer blows of internal rebellions in its Bohemian, Venetian and Hungarian borderlands. It attempted half a dozen schemes of internal reform culminating in the creation of the dual monarchy with the Hungarians but leaving its Slavic population (except for the Poles) dissatisfied. It barely managed to hold its own in its competition with Russia over the Balkan borderlands.

Although there was no armed conflict between the Russian and Habsburg Empires the Balkans remained a complex frontier where they continued their three way competition with the Ottomans through periodic interventions into the Danubian Provinces and the agency of client states like Serbia. On both sides of the Ottoman and Habsburg frontiers the growth of local nationalist sentiments introduced a new political force. Yet, the creation of independent states emerging in the wake of the Ottoman retreat was as much a result of outside pressure from the powers as it was of domestic rebellions. They continued to be borderlands, objects of political and cultural rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Russians. In the years approaching World War I the Russians appeared to have been gaining the edge over both the Ottomans and the Habsburgs by sponsoring the Balkan League. But the peoples of the southwest borderlands proved once again that they marched to a different drummer and in a different direction than the course their patrons had mapped out. It was a foretaste of the shape of things to come.

Whether real or imagined the threat of Russia's deep penetration into the southern rim of the Eurasian borderlands aroused the concern of Britain's imperial rulers. Ever since the Russians had broken through to the Black Sea coast at the end of the eighteenth century, the fear was that they aspired to become a Mediterranean power, Once there they would represent a menace to British control of the sea lanes to the East. British officials and publicists alike interpreted the Russian advance in the South Caucasus and after the Crimean War into Central Asia as a direct threat to India, the crown jewel of the empire. The two powers competed with one another for influence in the borderlands all along the southern periphery of the Russian Empire, from the foothills of the Caucasus, through Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet and Xinjiang. The British plotted it like a Victorian romance, called it the Great Game. By mid-twentieth century it became known as the first cold war, although the Crimean War did

raise the temperature. The irony was that the British commercial policies helped to weaken the domestic economies of Russia's major imperial rivals for the borderlands - the Ottoman Empire, Qajar Iran and Qing China - that London wished to keep out of the hands of St. Petersburg. The clash of ideologies raised the strategic stakes. The "genesis of Russophobia" in Britain was related to the tsarist policies of repression in Poland (1832), then Hungary (1848) and against the first Russian dissidents, men like Alexander Herzen, although neither the term nor the concept of universal human rights had yet been clearly articulated.

If in the first phase the peoples of the borderlands struggled to prevent being conquered and absorbed, then in the second phase they struggled to resist and even to overthrow the super-ordinate authority imposed upon them. If in the second phase Russia asserted its dominance over external rivals, its control over its newly conquered borderlands was never secure. For Russia as well as its enfeebled rivals it was a time of internal rebellion and other forms of resistance ranging from tribal revolts to national independence movements. The roster is impressive. In the Russian Empire there were four Polish revolts (1791, 1930, 1863 and 1905) endemic Muslim uprisings in the North Caucasus, several revolts in Georgia, and the revolution of the nationalities in 1905 throughout the western and southwestern borderlands in addition to the class war in the Russian core. In the Habsburg Empire the persistent opposition of the Hungarians flared into two major uprisings in the eighteenth century and another more serious in 1848) which forced the compromise with Hungary (Ausgleich) of 1867. In the Ottoman Empire the series of national independence movements weakened the central government beginning with the Serbs and Greeks, and followed by the Bulgarians and Romanians who were ultimately successful in separating and the Armenians who were not. In Iran recurrent tribal revolts led the overthrow of the Safavid dynasty in 1741 and a long period of anarchy before the Qajars reestablished imperial rule at the end of the eighteenth century but their authority in many areas of the country was never firm, especially in Azerbaizhan, the most rebellious of the provinces. In China throughout the nineteenth century revolts on the periphery from Yunnan to Xinkiang to Mongolia and within the core provinces severely diminished the Chinese defenses against Western imperialism in the coastal provinces. And these were only the violent forms of opposition. They do not include the more prosaic, but to imperial officials no less threatening signs of defiance: resistance to religious conversion, defense of cultural norms, language in particular, other "ordinary weapons" of resistance attributed originally to peasant societies by James C. Scott but no less applicable to the peoples of the borderlands.[7] Acquired to promote security, the borderlands proved sources of instability and subversion.

Yet, to insist only on resistance and rebellion would be to portray only one side of the complex relations between the core and periphery of empire. There was also accommodation manifest in an equally varied set of behavioral norms. The most widely practiced and mutually beneficial of these was the integration of elites. The co-optation of the indigenous

[7] James C. Scott, Weapons of the Weak. Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven, 1985) 28-9.See also James West, Domination and the Arts of Resistance (New Haven, 1990), 15, 199 who coins such phrases as "the hidden politics of the powerful and of the subordinates" and "infra politics" to cover all forms of "low profile resistance".

nobility or tribal leaders through issuing patents or recognizing previous titles and ranks proved to be one way of reducing or eliminating potential leaders of resistance. The Russians were particularly active in expanding the imperial nobility by admitting such groups as the Baltic barons, the Ukrainian *starshina* (or elements of them), Muslim *murzas*, Polish *szlachta*, Georgian princes and some tribal leaders from Central Asia. The Habsburgs welcomed the Magyar, Polish and Croat nobles (though they had wiped out the Czechs in the Thirty Years War). The Manchus integrated themselves into the Chinese aristocracy and recruited among the Mongol princes. The Ottomans granted titles to Christian converts to Islam who entered their service and the Iranians ennobled tribal leaders, particularly among the Turkic peoples of the northern frontier.

A second kind of integration was through government service either in the civil or military bureaucracy. In both the Habsburg and Russian Empires, for example, frontier guards like the Croats and Cossacks ranked among the most reliable troops in the imperial armies. In Iran it was the Georgian slave troops and in China the Manchu and Mongol bannermen who were among the elite formations. The Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire were a unique case of recruiting and converting Christian children from the periphery; but Kurdish troops were also used by the Porte.

Representatives from the borderlands often staffed government bureaucracies at different periods. In Russia there were a large number of Poles up to 1863 and always a small but highly visible representation from among the German Balts, as well as the occasional Armenian or Georgian. The Ottomans made extensive use of Christians in top offices, especially Armenians and Greeks who played important roles as reformers. In the early years the Qing dynasty recruited officials heavily among the Mongols. In Iran the central bureaucracies remained dominated by Persians, but local government was largely controlled by local elites.

The economic elites of the borderlands often enjoyed special privileges. In the Russian Empire local administrators in the borderlands regarded the indigenous merchants as more enterprising and successful than the Russians and promoted their interests actively. In the Ottoman Empire Christian merchants, mainly Greeks and Armenians monopolized most of the export trade. In Qing China the government gave extensive privileges to the Mongol traders along the northern frontier and to Muslims in the West. Up to the end of the multicultural empires, the choice to resist or accommodate depended in large measure upon the policies of the imperial rulers. For example, imperial policy on religious toleration for the peoples of the borderlands oscillated over time from one extreme to the other with particularly damaging effects on the internal stability of the Russian and Ottoman Empires which shared large Muslim and Christian populations. Attempts by the Habsburg and Russian Empires to impose an official language contributed to resistance among the national minorities in the Habsburg and Russian Empires, especially in their final decades.

To be sure resistance and accommodation should not be regarded as absolute categories for historically they are fraught with psychological ambiguity and social complexity.[8] Crossovers from one to the other or even the coexistence within a specific group or individual of both forms of dealing with domination were commonplace. Even during World War II when the lines between resistance and collaboration appeared to be clearly drawn, there were numerous examples of sifting allegiance depending on the tide of battle. Notwithstanding the occasionally blurred boundaries between the two categories, they retain their heuristic uses when placed within specific historic contexts.

The coexistence of strong traditions of resistance and accommodation within the borderlands persisted under different circumstances, with a different set of players into the third phase of the struggle over the borderlands. During World War II when the borderlands again became a contest zone between the great powers, the local protagonists of resistance and accommodation (or collaboration) lined up for or against the occupier and at the same time fought one another over the future of their society. The dimensions of that struggle, class, ethnic and ideological were largely defined by the political dynamics of the third phase. The difference in the extent of resistance during the third phase, in the twentieth century, would be the intensity of the assault on the cultural norms as well as the physical security of the people of the borderlands.

The second phase of the struggle over the borderlands was defined by the rise of two dynamic powers, Germany and Japan, on the flank of the Russian Empire reconstituted as the Soviet Union. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Germany and Japan as two latecomers to imperialism began to take an active interest in promoting their influence and control over the borderlands of Eurasia adjacent to their imperial core. Japan emerged triumphant from a three-way struggle with China and Russia that secured its possession of Korea and a share with Russia of influence in Manchuria. The revolutions that collapsed the Chinese and Russian Empires enabled it to extend its control if only briefly deep into Siberia. The Japanese intervention in the Russian Civil war revealed its plans for a radical reorganization of the Inner Asian borderlands.

At the same time, the German victories during World War I over a disintegrating Russian Empire spawned plans to create military colonies and buffer states out of Russia's western borderlands. Dragging along its Habsburg junior partner and tossing a sop to its Ottoman ally in the form of the South Caucasus borderlands, the military leaders of the Reich envisaged their conquests as the foundation of a new imperial core. The aim of this Mitteleuropa was to form a gigantic economic and political sphere in the heart of Europe under the control of the Reich ensuring its preponderance on the continent. German defeat in the war on the Western Front and the retreat of the Japanese from Siberia temporarily suspended their plans.

In the nineteen thirties new leadership in the flank powers unfurled even more radical transformative ideologies. Nazi Germany envisaged a racist state, a thousand year Reich aimed at transforming radically the East European borderlands by annihilating the Jewish population,

[8] Sherry Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," Journal of Comparative study of Society and History , 10 (1995), 175.

subjugating the Slavic (Polish and Russian) population and resettling the depopulated lands with German war veterans and their families. Japan envisaged a Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere aimed at eliminating the White man from East Asia subjugating China by colonizing Manchuria and converting it into the major industrial base for the entire region.

During the second period the successor states of the disintegrating Ottoman and Habsburg Empire engaged one another on a different level in another aspect of the struggle over the borderlands. Newly formed or reconstructed states emerging from the wreckage of the empires claimed to be nation states. But most of them retained or replicated the multi-cultural profile of their imperial predecessors: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania in the west, Turkey, Iran and China in the east. Their cultural core lands were encircled by culturally different frontier zones. Alternatively, there were so-called nation states that did not include large numbers of co-nationals who formed irredenta across arbitrarily drawn boundaries: Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania.

The Soviet Union was exceptional in flaunting its multi-cultural character and federal structure. Under Bolshevik leadership the new regime reassembled most of the old empire, defeating attempts of the tsarist borderlands to break away, with the exception of Finland and the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Stalin, himself a man of the borderlands, was largely responsible for the constitutional design of the new state which was more centralized than Lenin had proposed. It left open the possibility for adding republics and unifying national groups in the existing ones, a task he largely accomplished in 1939-40 by creating four new Soviet republics, the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Moldavian, failing only in his effort to regain Finland. His nationalities policies, reflecting his concern over the security and stability of the borderlands, was similar in one important way to that of his tsarist predecessors. They oscillated between relative tolerance of cultural differences, especially in the first decade of Soviet power during the period of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*), and repression of "nationalist deviation." Like the Germans and Japanese he sought to transform the borderlands radically although he chose different methods through collectivization and industrialization as well as imposing a culture that was socialist in content while nationalist in form.

Given the radically transformative character of the struggle between the Soviet Union and the flank powers, World War II in the borderlands took on a different character than previous conflicts. Behind the lines of the conventional clash of armies irregular or partisan warfare took lace where the terrain was suitable. Where it was not elements of the conquered populations engaged in various forms of resistance. Neither the German or Japanese occupation policies were designed to attract large numbers of supporters. But there were active collaborationists among the indigenous populations of the borderlands (and elsewhere in the occupied territories as well). The collaborationists did not always share the same aims as their patrons, and there was occasional friction between different factions. There were even larger numbers of those who were willing to accommodate, as there had always been, in indirect and less active ways to the demands of the occupiers. But there were plenty of opportunists among collaborationists, whether active or passive, and changing sides with

the fortunes of war was not exceptional. The supporters of resistance pose an even more complex problem.

Early in the war Churchill had issued the summons "to set Europe ablaze." After the invasion of the Soviet Union Stalin proclaimed a war of all freedom loving peoples against fascism and called for open resistance by communists within the framework of a united front. Throughout the war the Soviet Union and Great Britain, followed by the United States urged and supported acts of resistance ranging from espionage and sabotage to partisan warfare, not only in Europe but in East Asia as well. Yet, despite the efforts of the Allies to maintain unity against the common enemy, deep fissures appeared in the ranks of the resisters. In the western and Inner Asian borderlands they split into bitterly rival nationalist and communist camps, each side jockeying for a position from which to assert its authority in the postwar period.

In the last years of the war all throughout the borderlands civil wars were in full swing pitting collaborationists against resisters, nationalists against communists, and in "shatter zones" of highly mixed ethno-linguistic groups like Bosnia and west Ukraine, communal warfare broke out. In the borderlands of the Soviet Union nationalist groups in the Baltic republics and Ukraine disillusioned with German policies abandoned collaboration in exchange for resistance to the Red Army and the return of Soviet power. In Greece, the left wing resistance fought with the returning British Army and along the Yugoslav-Italian border a similar clash was barely avoided. In North China communist troops blocked the landing of American marines who sought to disarm the Japanese. Both nationalists and communists sought help from one or another of the great powers. The nationalists frequently expressed hope that at the end of the war the Anglo-American forces would their weapons against the Soviet Union. Local communists anticipated Soviet assistance to carry out a social revolution. In the meantime, the Big Three, not always in agreement, attempted nevertheless to establish the foundations for a postwar peace in borderlands over which they lacked decisive influence or complete control. Their willingness to make compromises was limited by their perceptions of the risks involved. Perceptions in turn were shaped by ideological assumptions and the actions of local political forces.

The Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States entertained visions of the post war world that not only reflected their geo-political interests but also belief systems that incorporated their historical experiences and universalistic values. For the soviet leaders the revolution of 1917 and the radical socio-economic transformation of the Soviet Union represented a model for the future, although pragmatic politics had blunted the messianic edge of Marxism-Leninism. Britain perceived its post war security in terms of preserving the empire with its preferential trade and uniform monetary system. The United States favored a neo-Wilsonian program of self-determination, free elections and an open global market. During the war the three allies had managed to cover over their ideological differences with a unified rhetoric embodied in the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration on Liberated Territories at Yalta. But each attached different meanings to the value generalities embodied in these documents.

Even before the end of hostilities, the Big Three found themselves increasingly drawn into the domestic strife within the borderlands, rooted in long term social and cultural conflicts exacerbated by external and civil war. The Soviet Union had more to lose if the compromises broke down. If it allowed non-communists, who were often a mix of nationalist, and often anti-communist resisters and collaborationists, to dominate the borderlands, then it would merely re-create a version of pre-war capitalist encirclement and the wartime sacrifices would have been in vain. If it imposed communist regimes it would alienate its wartime allies throw away prospects for economic assistance in rebuilding and in the long run fuel a restoration of a German and Japanese power on its flanks, this time as clients of the even more powerful U.S.

The Cold War crises began in Poland and Romania even before the war ended. It spread to the southeastern borderlands leading into the Greek Civil War and then to Central Europe: Hungary, the de facto division of Germany and the Prague coup. In 1946 it erupted in the borderlands of Iran. In China the long smoldering civil war entered its decisive phase followed in 1950 by the Korean coda. The events were accompanied by a rising level of ideological rhetoric: Kennan's 'long telegram", Stalin 1946 election speech, James Byrnes Stuttgart speech, the Truman Doctrine, the promulgation of the Cominform, Mao's declaration of "leaning to one side". Each crisis raised fresh obstacles to a general settlement. The process appeared to have acquired a momentum of its own. With the arms race to build and perfect atomic and nuclear weapons and after Stalin's death, the shifting focus to the Third World, the Cold War became global. But the struggle over the Eurasian borderlands was not over. It had entered a new phase marked first by internal revolts, new forms of resistance (and collaboration) and finally by the break up of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, a process well deserving of the name, "revenge of the borderlands."

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