

***War & Peace & War: The Life
Cycles of Imperial Nations***

Imperiogenesis: Factors that

Explain the Rise of Empires

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DRW: Imperiogenesis Chapters

1-3: Examples of the theory

- DW: Peoples originating on fault-line frontiers become characterized by cooperation and a high capacity for collective action, which in turn enables them to build large and powerful territorial states (p.6).
- 1. The Mongols on the Russian Frontier.
- 2. The Euroamericans on the Amerindian Frontier
- 3. The Germans on the Roman Frontier

Chapter 1: A Band of Adventurers Defeats a Kingdom

- Initially, the Russians were unable to unite against the Mongol threat (dozens of tiny principalities).
- The Mongols excelled at teamwork, capable of discipline, and internal cohesion.
- Oppression can only be accomplished from the basis of cooperation.
- Question dominating this book is why do large empires rise and fall?

Chapter 2: Life on the Edge: The Transformation of Russia – and America

- Structured by boundaries, both religious and climatic/ecological
 - Between the steppe (extensive plain without trees) and forest, served as a fault line between the two civilizations.
 - The eastern frontier had no natural defensive feature like that of the Oka River in the South, leaving the people there defenseless.
- Life on the steppe frontier
 - Russian (Muscovite) strategy was the construction of fortified defensive lines that extended across the steppe
 - Eventually, the enemy could no longer make it past the Russian defense

Religious Cohesion

- Russia began to pull together as a long cultural change to hundreds of years of attacks.
- Longstanding “us” versus “them” mentality grew into “good” versus “evil,” the Christians against the pagans.
 - Religion was the glue that held the Muscovite society together.
 - Cooperated not because it was the rational thing to do, but the *right* thing.
- The pressure of the steppe nomads molded Muscovy’s institutions and culture.

America as a Frontier: Similar to Russia?

- American Melting Pot: when confronted with such obvious aliens as the native Americans, two European settlers, even if they came from different countries, could not help but feel like they were kin.
- These settlers cooperated with each other and fought together against the native Americans, resulting in shared feelings and eventually a common American culture and language.
- Americans, Mongols, and Muscovites all originated from intense and prolonged fault-line frontiers.
- Russians identified the enemy by way of religious difference, whereas Americans identified the enemy by way of the race marker.

Turchin's Theory

People originating on fault-line frontiers become characterized by cooperation and high capacity for collective action, which in turn allows them to build large and powerful territorial states.

Chapter 3: Slaughter in the Forest

At the *Limites* of the Roman Empire

- Tests his theory in observing the Roman Empire
- The Rhine River served as a frontier, as well as *limites* (singular *limes*), a path between fields.
- Rome wanted German land for protection.
- Different religions
 - Roman Christians
 - Germanic tribes followed the cult of Odin (*wodan*), catered to the violent, unsettled, and treacherous conditions of the Rhineland.

Creation of the medieval German Identity

- First Phase (100 B.C. -A.D. 100): war chiefs banded the independent Germanic tribes together in loose confederations.
- Second Phase: associated with the rise of the Odin cult and sacral kingship, the confederations became much more tightly integrated and evolved a high capacity for concerted action.
- Third Phase: the Franks united most of the others within a single territorial state.

How did the Byzantine Empire Rise?

- Began in the 1st century when the northern Balkans became part of the Roman Frontier.
- 2nd and 3rd century Rome encountered political decentralization, with a collapse of authority at the center and the frontier provinces left to pick up the pieces and take care of themselves.
- Constantine, successor to the reunited Roman Empire
 - Adopted Christianity as the state religion.
 - Built Constantinople, the Byzantine capital

Period of instability

- Byzantine nation still in process of formation.
- This process affecting other frontier areas.
- New imperial nations arose outside the Roman frontiers.

Confirmation of Turchin's hypothesis.

People originating on fault-line frontiers become characterized by cooperation and high capacity for collective action, which in turn allows them to build large and powerful territorial states.