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.