

THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, 1650–1831

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It is always useful to begin with definitions. Grand strategy encompasses a vision, political objectives, and strategic planning. A government, a ruling elite, must have a comprehensive vision of what is needed to achieve security and gain political objectives. That vision is not static; it evolves with circumstances, but it proceeds from some basic assumptions. Grand strategy also includes strategy in the narrower sense—which is the art of making war on the map and moving armies across the whole theater of operations—industrial policy, and an ideology of cultural symbols that embodies the vision, informs strategy, and rationalizes policy. Grand strategy, then, means the management of the totality of forces and resources in war and peace.¹

I postulate the existence of three theaters. One was the western or Baltic theater, encompassing the basin of the Baltic Sea east of the Norwegian Alps and the Elbe River. The dominant powers in the seventeenth century were Sweden and Poland, both of which invaded Russia during the Time of Troubles (1598–1613), and the Polish king even reached the Kremlin. But the rollback of the Polish empire began soon afterwards, and the peace of Andrusovo (1667) gave Russia Kiev and Smolensk. Russia's strategy would be to destroy the political and military capability of both powers, and the radius of its operations, taking Moscow as the epicenter of Russian expansion, would be about 2,000 kilometers. The second was the southern or Black Sea theater, encompassing the basin of that sea, although its western part, the Dniepr-Dniestr corridor, also belonged to the western theater because it was part of the Polish empire. The offensive there began with the establishment of a protectorate over the Left-Bank Ukraine in 1654. Russia subsequently aimed at the destruction of the Crimean Khanate and the establishment of a permanent

¹ Jomini's "Art of War," in *Roots of Strategy: A Collection of Military Classics*, vol. 2 (New York, 1987), 460; Raoul Castex, *Strategic Theories*, trans. and ed. Eugenia C. Kiesling (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1994), 44.

presence on the Danube. The radius of operations would likewise be about 2,000 kilometers. This southern theater also included the western basin of the Caspian with its "capital" in Astrakhan, the great military headquarters matching Kiev in the west. Finally, there was an eastern or Siberian theater, encompassing the basin of the Arctic Ocean, but also facing China beyond Lake Baikal and the Kazakh steppe. Because of the enormous distances involved—Irkutsk was 5500 kilometers from Moscow—it would remain a subordinate theater during the period under consideration. Nevertheless, Russian expansion also began in the 1650s, but was stalled in 1689 by the resistance of Manchu China. Peter's policies would build upon this legacy of expansionism and commit Russia to permanent rivalry with Sweden, Poland, Prussia, the Ottomans, and Persia, until it achieved hegemony in the western and southern theaters in the late 1820s.

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One can distinguish three periods in the history of Russia's grand strategy between 1700 and 1831. The first stretched from the start of Peter's reign until the end of the second war with Sweden in 1743. This was a time of war, peace, and again war, during which three major principles of Russia's grand strategy were established and tested in practice.²

First, Russia must be able to carry out deep strategic penetrations in all three theaters either at the same time or in quick succession. The great conflict of this period was the Northern War with Sweden. After the Poltava victory of 1709, the Russians went on an offensive, which culminated in the 1716 expedition across the whole of Northern Germany to Denmark, from which a joint Russo-Danish force would cross the Sound into the southern provinces of Sweden. The crossing did not take place for logistical and political reasons; nevertheless, the Russians moved some 40,000 troops through Mecklenburg to Hamburg and Copenhagen, over 2,000 kilometers from Moscow. During the war of 1741-43 another 40,000 Russians again reached

² The title of this paper and the conceptual approach were inspired by Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Luttwak, however, is little concerned with ideology or economics. For him, grand strategy remains an essentially military construct.

the Gulf of Bothnia, 1,500 kilometers from Moscow—but the gulf was a moat beyond which they could not establish themselves.³

There was another instance of deep penetration in the western theater. It is important to remember that during the entire period from 1700 to 1831 Russia's main enemy was France. France managed a system of alliances with Sweden, Brandenburg, Poland, and the Ottomans directed against Austria first, but by implication against Russia as well. Russia's strategy was to knock down the props of French hegemony in Europe and use them to support its own. Russia's natural ally was Austria. When Austria went to war with France over the election of Stanislas Leszczyński as king of Poland in 1733 and suffered reverses, it asked for a Russian expeditionary force of 20,000 men to link up with imperial forces in Heidelberg, only 20 kilometers from the Rhine. When the Russians reached Heidelberg in August 1735, they were 2,400 kilometers from Moscow.

Russia was no less determined to assert power into the southern theater. Indeed, the first deep penetration took place there during Peter's reign. The Prut expedition of 1711 was caused by the activities of Charles XII, who had taken refuge in Ottoman territory after the battle of Poltava. The strike force consisted of 32,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. It advanced by forced marches in a vain attempt to prevent the Ottomans from crossing the Danube and met them on the Prut in July, some 1,500 kilometers from Moscow. The disastrous encounter exposed the limits of Russia's military capabilities at the time. The Northern War was barely over in 1721 when Peter launched an expedition against Persia in order to block an Ottoman advance to the Caspian shores and gain trade concessions that would facilitate commercial relations with India. The Russians won the entire southern shore of the Caspian but in fact did not go beyond Rasht, some 3,000 kilometers from Moscow. The Persian expedition, another remarkable example of deep strategic penetration, must be connected with an earlier expedition into Central Asia, in 1716. The same year Russian forces were poised in Denmark for an invasion of Sweden. Peter sent Alexander Cherkasskii with 4,000 men

³ The 1716 expedition is discussed in I. Haxlund "When Tsar Peter Changed His Mind," *Scando-Slavica* 43 (1997), 5–17. For a handy reference to times confused and biased however to Russian military campaigns, see Liubomir Grigor'evich Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia i flot v XVIII veke: ocherki* (Moscow: Voen. izd-vo, 1958), 181–290, 460–631.

to Khiva with specific instructions: build a fortress at the mouth of the Amu Daria; induce the khan to recognize Russian suzerainty; and establish trade relations with India via the Amu Daria. The expedition reached Khiva, about 950 kilometers from Astrakhan and 2,700 kilometers from Moscow, only to be wiped out by the khan.⁴ These expeditions were not motivated by defensive considerations—they were offensive moves designed to destabilize an enemy and gain substantial strategic and commercial advantages.

A second principle of Russia's emerging grand strategy called for the concentrated deployment of troops in the Moscow region when the army was not engaged in offensive operations beyond the imperial border. The deployment of 1725 withdrew all Russian troops from the Baltic provinces and the Left-Bank Ukraine.⁵ The army consisted at the time of 42 regiments of infantry and 33 of dragoons. Except for two regiments of infantry stationed in Siberia (which in those days stretched across the Urals as far as Viatka) and additional troops stationed in northern Persia as part of the so-called Southern Corps (*Nizovyi korpus*), all the regular troops were stationed in and around Moscow. There were eight regiments in Moscow itself, two in Kaluga, three each in Riazan, Tula, and Iaroslavl, five in Uglich, Tver and Poshekhon'e, six in Vladimir, Suzdal and Iurev, and another three in Pereslavl-Zalesskii. These 33 regiments formed a ring around the old capital, the very core of the deployable force facing all directions. The other 36 regiments were deployed along a second ring. Eight were stationed in St. Petersburg, Novgorod and the towns gravitating toward it—Pskov and Velikie Luki, and even Olonets which had once been part of the Novgorodian empire. This region was Petersburg's immediate hinterland and faced the Baltic provinces and Belorussia. Regiments of dragoons were stationed in Viazma, Smolensk (on the road to Minsk and Brest-Litovsk), and in Briansk (on the Desna leading to Kiev), but six more faced south in the Elets-Tambov-Shatsk triangle across the old corridor of invasion for the steppe nomads toward Riazan and Moscow. More regiments were deployed on a huge semi-circle from Penza to Galich, including nine between Nizhnii-Novgorod and Simbirsk, with three guarding the arsenals in the Viatka area and the saltworks of Solikamsk.

⁴ D. Golosov, "Pokhod v Khivu v 1717 godu," *Voennyi sbornik* 10 (1861), 303–64.

⁵ The deployment is included in Ivan Kirilovich Kirilov, *Tsvetushchee sostoianie Vserossiiskogo gosudarstva* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 368–80.

There was a definite vision behind this concentrated deployment of the army. After the exhausting war with Sweden and the expansion toward the Baltic, Peter realized the dangers of over-expansion from a base of operations that was insufficiently populated and developed. He needed to raise the density of the Russian population and may have even contemplated bringing settlers from the outlying regions back into the Muscovite core.⁶ Increased settlement would encourage trade; in turn, trade would foster the development of towns and facilitate the provisioning of the troops. Peter also carried out an extensive program of industrialization focused on the resources of the Urals, which now supplemented those of the Tula region, where muskets, pistols, and bayonets had been manufactured since the mid-seventeenth century. The production of the Urals had to be channeled westwards, and the Volga was the great axis of the Muscovite core from Kazan to Tver. The new capital on the Gulf of Finland was intended to eclipse Stockholm, as Russian hegemony replaced Sweden's domination in the eastern Baltic.

But if Petersburg faced west, it also needed to develop its hinterland in the east: it had to be linked with the Volga. Thus, the purpose of the canal built between 1703 and 1708 linking the Volga at Tver with the Volkhov at Novgorod was to bring provisions and supplies to the northern capital. Once the Petersburg-Moscow-Kazan-Ekaterinburg axis was completed and Petersburg had been fully integrated into the Volga basin, the managers of the military-industrial complex could take full advantage of Russia's interior lines, from which a single but highly mobile army could strike in any direction to dispose of an enemy before turning against another.

There was a close relationship between the concentrated deployment of the army, the concentrated development of the Muscovite core's resources, and the protectionist tariff of 1724. Peter's vision was that of a Fortress Russia built on a maximum economy of force and bent on achieving hegemony in the Heartland "by means of awesomeness," as the Chinese were fond of putting it.⁷ The cult of

⁶ For a reference to this project see Sergei Mikhailovich Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* (Moscow: Sotsekgiz, 1960–66), vol. 11 (1963), 58.

⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 81. For the terms "Heartland" and "core areas" see John LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World 1700–1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1–13.

raw power exercised by a powerful ruler from a narrow but highly concentrated base was central to the imagery of Peter's reign. The great surge capability inherent to the concept of concentrated deployment projected effective power out of proportion to real military strength. It operated as a tool of political suasion without the need to use actual military force.

The third principle guiding the imperial government and its ruling elite was the need to build a glacis of client states and societies through which imperial desires could be translated into reality without the use of force. This glacis had three constituent parts: the friendly state, client states, and client societies. The friendly state was Austria, with which Russia had many common interests. There were three client states. First, the Treaty of Nystadt enabled Russia to interfere in Swedish domestic affairs, and Sweden became the battleground between French and Russian ambitions. The rivals spent large sums to win legislative elections, with the Russians supporting the Caps, who wanted peaceful relations, and the French supporting the Hats, who wanted war to recover the lost provinces. The Russians also toyed with the idea of a Russo-Swedish dynastic union; when this failed, they imposed their own candidate on the Swedish throne.

Poland was the second client state. The Saxon dynasty, which is synonymous with the country's decline, was installed in 1697, not without Russian pressure. During the Northern War, Poland was a junior partner not represented at the Nystadt negotiations. To confirm that the ruling house owed its election to Russia's assent, Petersburg ordered the invasion of Poland in 1733 to force the Poles to elect the son of Augustus II rather than the French candidate. The use of force made it clear that Poland could resist Russian demands only at the cost of an armed confrontation.

Prussia was the third client state. During the first half of the century, Prussia consisted of Brandenburg and East Prussia, separated by the Pomerelian corridor. East Prussia was always at the mercy of a Russian invasion, especially after the annexation of Livonia: Riga was only 380 kilometers from Königsberg. Brandenburg was poor with sandy soils and a barren coastline, and in the 1720s and 1730s it still had to follow the Russian line. Russia was the ally of Austria, which resented the growth of Prussian power under the ambitious Hohenzollern kings. Moreover, Peter had married one of his nieces to the duke of Mecklenburg, hoping to make the country

another client state and acquire a naval base. Brandenburg was thus surrounded, and Berlin had to be impressed by the "awesomeness" of Russian power.

The issue of client societies is complex. Some were within the administrative boundary of the empire, while others remained outside. Among those within the empire were the Baltic Germans, who were badly shaken by the Northern War but recovered during the 1730s. They remained an autonomous society, but by participating in the governing of the empire they developed a dual and by no means contradictory allegiance: to their old way of life and to the empire as a whole. Some of the great nobles of Lithuania, descendants of those who had surrounded Grand Prince Gedimin in the fourteenth century, such as the Golitsyns, the Trubetskois, and Kurakins, had also emigrated to join the imperial ruling elite. They formed a transnational network, still powerful in the 1730s.⁸

In the south, Moldavian families, some of which retreated to Russia after the Prut campaign of 1711 to escape Ottoman retribution, constituted another client society. The most famous were the Kantemirs, who married into the ruling elite; one of them became ambassador to France and Britain and a famous poet. Georgian families, who emigrated in 1725 after the Ottomans incorporated most of eastern Transcaucasia, formed their own lobbies in Moscow and Petersburg, entered upper levels of the imperial Russian government, and yet kept ties with their homeland. The Cossacks were both within the empire—like those on the left bank of the Dniepr and the basin of the Don—and outside it, like the Zaporozhians in that indeterminate zone between the Dniepr and the Crimea. Bound to the Russians by Orthodoxy, Cossacks complemented the imperial infantry with their light cavalry and kept the Crimean and Nogai Tatars away from the Russian center. Relations between the Russians and the Cossacks were not always friendly, it is true, but the Cossacks operated in an environment which left them no choice but to do the Russians' work: they were surrounded by Catholic Poles and Muslim Tatars.

Each of these client states and societies—and we may add the Kalmyks as well—had its own political and strategic mission: to create

⁸ One may speak here of kinship diplomacy, in which families beyond the border were connected by ties of blood with members of the imperial ruling elite. On this "Gedimin network" see Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, vol. 10 (1963), 341.

favorable conditions for the projection of maximum power by a highly mobile army concentrated in the Muscovite core. Baltic Germans, Lithuanians, Moldavians, Georgians, etc., facilitated the administration of the empire without requiring the employment of Russians and prepared the way for Russian expansion into the frontier. In other words, these client societies operated as fifth columns beyond the administrative borders of the empire. Fortress Russia needed this glacis of friendly or semi-friendly communities as it set about establishing its hegemony in the Heartland.

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I now turn to the application of these principles during the second period, that of hegemonic expansionism, from 1743 to 1796. On four occasions the Russians were able to carry out deep strategic penetrations beyond Russia proper. First, in 1748, in the wake of the Austro-Russian struggle for hegemony in central Europe, the Austrians asked Russia to send 30,000 men to help fight the French on the Rhine once again. The Russian expedition followed in Lacy's footsteps thirteen years earlier and reached Ebensfeld north of Bamberg, about 2,200 kilometers from Moscow. A second example was the Seven Years War of 1756–63. Frederick II came to power in 1740 determined to challenge Austria in German affairs, and his first move was to make war on it to gain Silesia. He was successful in 1742. The Prussian client state thus acquired an industrial base and could no longer be expected to be obedient to Russian demands. It was feared in Petersburg that Frederick might challenge Russia in Poland and the Baltic provinces. The emotional reaction to Frederick's victories showed the strength of the assumption that Prussia had become Russia's client state, whose independent action was intolerable.⁹ From then on, Russo-Prussian relations deteriorated. Russian strategy in the war fell victim to its old belief that the maximum available power must be directed in a massive thrust against the enemy's capital to force him to capitulate. The Russian objective was not to destroy Prussia with an army of 70,000, but to reinforce its status as a client state, with the Austrians regaining Silesia and Russia gaining East Prussia. But by focusing on Berlin, the allies wasted their resources

⁹ Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii*, vol. 11 (1963), 276–83.

against Frederick's superior ability to make the best of his interior lines. It was not until 1761 that the Austrians focused on Schweidnitz (Swidnica) in Silesia and the Russians on Kolberg (Kołbrzeg) in Pomerania, placing Frederick against the wall. The great battles were fought on the approaches to the Oder, 1750 kilometers from Moscow, the Russians moving their base of operations forward to the towns of the lower Vistula where they could count on adequate provisioning.¹⁰

The third major intervention was the Russo-Turkish war of 1768–74, in which a massive commitment of almost the entire army—about 150,000 men—was made against the Ottomans. The Russian army retraced Peter I's steps in 1711 but went further, reaching Bucharest and the Danube, 2000 kilometers from Moscow. The empress insisted on taking the war another 900 kilometers south across Bulgaria to Constantinople. However, this penetration could not be sustained. The Ottomans had built a number of powerful fortresses along the right bank of the Danube, and there were more deeper in Bulgaria from which to launch flanking attacks against the Russian advance. The Russians also made a diversion in Transcaucasia, sending a small expedition across the mountains to Poti on the Black Sea, 2,400 kilometers from Moscow. Finally, they also retraced Peter's steps with the Persian expedition of 1796. The Russians had withdrawn from Transcaucasia sixty years earlier; they were brought back by the disintegration of the Georgian monarchy and the shah's attack on Tiflis in 1795. Logistics and distances presented formidable problems. The distance from Moscow along the Volga to Astrakhan is over 2300 kilometers, and from Astrakhan to Baku almost 1000 kilometers. The purpose of the expedition was to recover the provinces abandoned in 1732–35 and strike at Tehran, the new Persian capital, over 4000 kilometers from Moscow. Russian troops reached Baku but were recalled immediately after Catherine's death.¹¹

The deployment of the army underwent basic changes during this period—the consequences of the empire's expansion and of changing

¹⁰ Beside Beskrovnyi consult Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700–1800* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 74–118.

¹¹ A. Petrov, *Voina Rossii s Turtsiei i Pol'skimi konfederatami, 1769–1774 god.* (Petersburg, 1866) and N. Dubrovin, "Pokhod grafa V. A. Zubova v Persiiu v 1796 godu," *Voennyi Sbornik*, vol. 2 (1874), 187–231; vol. 3, 5–32; vol. 4, 191–207; vol. 5, 5–33; vol. 6, 177–99.

relationships with the client states and societies. Prussia became a recalcitrant client state, even after it barely escaped a staggering defeat in 1762, and the Russo-Prussian and Austro-Prussian antagonisms became dominant features of the period. But already in 1772 Austria and Prussia maneuvered the Russians into taking part in the partitions of Poland, which had the effect of forcing Russia to carry out a 700-kilometer strategic withdrawal from the Oder to the Niemen and the Bug. Russia's hegemonic expansionism had created a backlash in the two Germanic states and Poland became its victim. In Sweden likewise, the coup of 1772, which sought to pull the country out of its disgraceful political corruption, was openly anti-Russian; it succeeded only because almost the entire strategic force was fighting on the Danube. Only in the east did the situation remain stable, despite the turbulence in the steppe. This period witnessed the great Manchu onslaught against the western Mongols, which created intense turbulence in the Kazakh steppe, but also strengthened the Kazakhs' gravitation toward the Russian lines. There could be no offensive operations there—the Russians were hopelessly outmanned by the Chinese and could only stay put behind the Orenburg and Siberian lines.

Russian successes against the Ottomans radically changed the geopolitical situation in the southern theater, where the triumph of Russian arms at the peace of Kuchuk Kainardji in 1774 had immense repercussions. It created favorable conditions for the annexation of the Crimean khanate in 1783, leaving only Ochakov as the Ottoman beachhead on the northern shores of the Black Sea (it too was taken in 1792). The consequence was the elimination of the Cossacks as client societies. In fact, these societies had been undermined from within for some time, but the trend accelerated during the second half of the eighteenth century. As they became increasingly settled, Cossack societies split three ways. An upper layer of landowning Cossacks grew to form the elite of those societies, very much in violation of the Cossack principle of equality among the members. This elite was an eager client of the Russians, because it needed Moscow to recognize and confirm its newly acquired and uncertain status and because the empire offered attractive careers to a provincial elite. But the eighteenth century also witnessed the triumph of serfdom, not only in Russia proper but in the frontier regions as well, from the Baltic provinces to Georgia. Its impact on Cossack and Bashkir societies was profound. The great mass of Cossacks who had

not “made it” by acquiring landed properties was relegated to the status of serf and state peasant—the collective property of the ruling class. This convergence in the social order of Russian and frontier societies destroyed old client relationships by merging these new provincial elites into a multinational imperial elite. Finally, those who refused to accept their fate teamed up with members of the elite to form carbineer and hussar regiments in the regular army. These regiments retained their territorial base but lost their old territorial mission. Don Cossacks, Kalmyks, and carbineer regiments from the Ukraine of Settlements fought in Russia’s campaigns against the Swedes, the Poles, the Prussians, and the Turks. The Zaporozhian Cossacks suffered a similar fate. After 1774, they became obsolete as a client society of the Russians against the Crimean Tatars. Some fled, some became enserfed, others were deported to the Kuban steppe to form the so-called “faithful” Black Sea Cossacks. There, the turbulence of an unsettled frontier allowed them to move backward in time and recreate for a while an egalitarian society. And in distant Transcaucasia eastern Georgia became a client state in 1783, only to be annexed seventeen years later.¹²

It became clear in the 1730s that the principle of concentrated deployment was not viable: the Muscovite core was too poor to support such a heavy military burden and there were tensions between the soldiery and the population. Moreover, because of the great distances involved, logistical support would benefit from the creation of regional sectors constituting base areas with depots and supply stores, each with a regional mission. Thus, this second period witnessed a gradual change from concentrated to territorial deployment. In 1763, the army was distributed among eight territorial divisions.¹³ Of the 100 regiments listed, only 47 were now deployed in the core area. Seventeen formed a first ring around the old capital, from Torzhok on the road to the Vyshnii Volochek canal, via Rzhev on the Volga on the road to the Dvina, with a cluster around Kaluga on the road to Briansk, another around Tula on the road to Orel and Kursk, and a third in Kolomna and Riazan on the road to Penza and the Volga. A second ring began in Narva and continued via Pskov to

¹² For the reform of the Cossack territories see Zenon Kohut, *Russian Centralism and Ukrainian Autonomy. Imperial Absorption of the Hetmanate, 1760s–1830s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 213, 216–22.

¹³ The 1763 deployment is in *Stoletie voennago ministerstva* (St. Petersburg: Voennoe Ministerstvo, 1902–1914), vol. 4, 35–41.

Velikie Luki on the Belorussian border. Its southern section began in Briansk and continued via Trubchevsk to Rylsk facing Little Russia. The east was almost completely denuded of troops, a factor that would play a role in the progress of the Pugachev rebellion. There was only one regiment in Saratov and a smaller detachment in Simbirsk.

By then, however, there were already 20 regiments echeloned across the entire length of Estland and Livland (including five in Riga and three in Reval). This Baltic forward strategy was not so much defensive as it was offensive. These troops faced Kurland and Lithuania and put pressure on Warsaw. Beyond Lithuania, they also faced Königsberg and were an instrument of political suasion on Berlin. Another seven regiments in Vyborg province faced Swedish Finland. There were 22 regiments on the left bank of the Dniepr. Most were stationed in the old Hetmanate between the Desna and the Vorskla, where the Ukraine of Settlements began. They faced not only the Polish empire across the Dniepr but also, and chiefly, the Crimean khanate. The novelty was the existence of a Siberian Corps of nine dragoon and two infantry regiments stationed along the Irtysh Line, in the Altai Mountains, and in eastern Siberia (Irkutsk and Selenginsk). This deployment was defensive; the Russians remained on guard against the Chinese, especially in the area of Lake Zaisan, where they were feeling their way toward a common border with the Chinese empire.

The deployment of 1796 marked the culmination of a trend.¹⁴ It must, of course, be placed in the context of the recent partitions of the Polish empire and the war with the Ottomans. Of the 115 regiments, only 28 or 24 percent were stationed in Russia proper, at the usual places: on the roads to Tver, Smolensk, Kaluga, Tula, Vladimir, and Iaroslavl; in Smolensk, between Petersburg and Novgorod; and in Orel and Kursk. By contrast, we find a heavy concentration in the western theater: only four regiments in Vyborg province, but 14 in Livonia (including eight in recently annexed Kurland) and 10 in Lithuania. They were stationed in the major cities and along the major roads leading to the Prussian border and to the Polish territories annexed by Prussia as far as the Niemen. Another six were in Belorussia, including two in the Minsk area,

¹⁴ *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, 1st series, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830), vol. 23 (1796), no. 17606.

annexed in 1795. Also stationed in the western theater were 15 regiments of the Ukrainian Division deployed on the Right-Bank Ukraine annexed in 1793 and 1795. After Livonia, this was the most sensitive sector: if the deployment was defensive in that it sought to consolidate Russia's dominion in the region, it was also offensive because it faced the new Austrian possessions in Poland and the Ottoman possessions in Moldavia-Wallachia. Thus 49 regiments or 43 percent were deployed in the western theater. The deployment of the Ukrainian Division merged almost imperceptibly with that of the Ekaterinoslav Division: most of its 15 regiments were stationed in the Ochakov steppe, acquired in 1792. There was a separate division in the Crimea (five regiments) and another in the Caucasus with nine regiments strung along the Caucasian Line from the Taman Peninsula to Kizliar, making a total of 29 regiments in the southern theater, or 26 percent of the total. Another nine regiments were in the Orenburg Territory and Siberia.

These developments could not be divorced from economic and cultural policies. A major event was the abolition in 1755 of custom houses within European Russia, except along the border with the Baltic provinces. This paved the way for the creation of a vast internal market, protected by the tariff of 1757, which raised some taxes on foreign trade to a higher level than in 1724. Fortress Russia was slowly giving way to Fortress Empire. And although the 1766 tariff was influenced by free trade ideas, that of 1793 marked a return to protectionism. Meanwhile, the tariff in effect in the Baltic provinces since the days of Queen Christina was abolished in 1782 and the provinces were integrated into the imperial market. The Muscovite core's market expanded with troop deployment. And this emerging Fortress Empire was treated first to the spectacle of Baroque theatricality, with its powerful attraction on client states and societies, then to Catherinian classicism with its monuments inspired by memories of imperial Rome and the geometric vision of imperial administration articulated in the local government statute of 1775.¹⁵ The creation of a defensive perimeter by 1796 was sketching the outline

¹⁵ For this see Konstantin Lodyzhenskii, *Istoriia russkogo tamozhennogo tarifa* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. S. Balasheva, 1886), 127-39; Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995-2000), here vol. 1, 93; and John LeDonne, "The Territorial Reform of the Russian Empire 1775-1796," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 23 (1982), 147-85 and vol. 24 (1983), 411-57.

of an empire in which, paradoxically, cultural and administrative unity would coexist with regional diversity—of which the army would become the standard bearer.

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The third period, from 1796 to 1831, witnessed the final territorialization of the army: the continuous expansion of the empire brought about the fragmentation of the strategic force and the creation of regional formations with clearly defined regional missions. Before that became clear, however, a major principle of Russia's grand strategy remained the determination to carry out deep strategic penetrations in order to strike at the capital of the enemy core area. Indeed, never had Russia projected such overwhelming power at such great distances in any of its previous wars.

There was a fourth and last Russo-Swedish war in 1808–09 for the ostensible purpose of forcing Sweden to join the Continental System. Its real purpose, however, was to transform the Gulf of Bothnia into an impregnable moat behind which Russia's Baltic possessions and Petersburg itself would be secure. The three-pronged offensive—along the Åland archipelago, across the Gulf of Bothnia, and around the Gulf's end—was an impressive strategic operation. It did force the Swedes to cede Finland and the Ålands, bringing the Russians to within 45 kilometers of the Swedish coast and 120 kilometers of Stockholm. There was another moat in Russian strategic thinking: the Danube. By 1812, the Russians had established themselves on the northern arm of the river's delta. The war of 1828–29 gave them the entire delta. In the Persian sector, they had established themselves in Tiflis, 2,000 kilometers from Moscow, and were poised for an invasion of Persia: the operational plan for 1827 called for a march on Tehran, 1,250 kilometers from Tiflis. Paskevich did not make it to the Persian capital because peace was made in time, but he reached Tabriz.

These projections of military power were impressive enough, but they took place in familiar directions: Peter had been in Finland in 1714, on the Prut in 1711, in northern Persia in 1722. They paled in comparison with Russian operations during the French Revolution. Russia felt threatened by the message of the Revolution, but its vital interests were not affected until Napoleon's own hegemonic expan-

sionism began. There was no defensive justification for the two unprecedented Russian interventions of 1799. The lesser one was a landing in Holland in alliance with the British for the purpose of creating a beachhead from which to carry the counter-revolution into northern France. The other was Suvorov's Italian and Swiss expedition: its mission was to take the counter-revolution to Paris. Both deep penetrations into the European Coastland failed, but in 1805 the Russians intervened again, committing 70,000 men to help the Austrians as far as Bavaria. Of course, the most impressive projection of power took place during the campaigns of 1813-14. Russia once again, as in 1735 and 1748, marched toward the Rhine, but this time went much farther. It committed 150,000 men (instead of 30,000 in the earlier campaigns) to an Austro-Prussian-Russian coalition, and in March 1814 the Russians entered Paris, nearly 3000 kilometers from Moscow. This victory had a symbolic meaning. France had been a key enemy throughout the eighteenth century. This time, the Russians had advanced the war to the enemy core area's capital and taken it. They would never take Stockholm, Constantinople, or Tehran.

The army returned to Russia in 1814 and was redeployed.¹⁶ By 1819, of 253 regiments 107, or 42 percent of the total, were stationed in Russia proper, as opposed to 24 percent in 1796, 47 percent in 1763, and 100 percent in 1727. These troops were deployed in three formations around Moscow. There were 12 regiments in Moscow province, six each in Smolensk, Kaluga, Vladimir, and Iaroslavl provinces and 10 in Riazan and Tambov provinces. Their mission was traditional: to protect the city against disturbances and to form a first base in echelons of troops radiating outward from the city. The second formation was deployed between Petersburg and Tver along the Volga-Volkhov waterway and in the environs of Petersburg. This too was traditional. South of Moscow, there was a third cluster between the Desna announcing Belorussia and the Khopër, beyond which began the land of the Don Cossacks. This was the old steppe zone between Tula and the Ukraine of Settlements. Not surprisingly, all its 28 regiments were cavalry. All these troops belonged to the First Army, headquartered in Mogilev in Belorussia.

¹⁶ Composition de l'armée russe, 1819: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, archives diplomatiques, vol. 27, Russie 1819-27. Forces et colonies militaires, fos. 1-37.

They formed a strategic force no longer available for deep strategic penetration but to reinforce the Second Army, headquartered in Tulchin in Podolia, and other corps of the First Army with distinctly regional missions.

The First I Army Corps in Mitava (Kurland), for instance, was deployed in the Baltic provinces and along the Petersburg-Riga-Königsberg highway. It faced East Prussia and kept up military pressure as an instrument of political suasion toward Berlin. The Lithuanian Separate Corps and the Polish Army were commanded by Grand Duke Constantine in Warsaw. Both created a military infrastructure for a reconstituted Polish empire, albeit one associated with the Russian empire under the same crown. Their mission was to maintain internal security in an area still marked by considerable turbulence. The deployment was also offensive. The annexation of Congress Poland was a political disaster but a strategic victory, for it gave Russia control of a salient between the Berlin-Königsberg highway and Silesia, placing the Prussians at a considerable disadvantage. The Lithuanian Corps also faced L'vov, then part of the Austrian empire. Its deployment was an incipient threat to Austria: backed by additional troops from the First Army, it could be used to launch an expedition against Vienna.

Similar considerations apply to the deployment in the southern theater, where 88 regiments, or 35 percent of the total, were stationed. The army had two regional missions there: against the Ottomans and in the Caucasus. The Second Army was deployed in Podolia, along the Dniestr, in Bessarabia, and the Ochakov steppe. In the event of war, it would go on the offensive toward the Danube. But it was also backed by an army corps of the First Army headquartered in Kiev and another based in Kremenchug on the Dniepr. Behind these two army corps was another based in Kursk in the core area. We thus see concentric rings of deployment centered for the most part in Moscow. The first ring was around the old capital. The second ran from Tver to Riazan via Smolensk and Kaluga; the third was formed by the Mitava corps, the Lithuanian, Kiev, and Kremenchug corps, the fourth by the Polish Army and the Second Army.

This fourth deployment was an offensive one directed against Prussia, Austria and the Ottomans, but it was also part of a grand strategy that was becoming increasingly defensive. The crushing of the Polish uprising in 1831 strengthened the defensive posture of the

empire. In the Caucasus, the separate corps had a purely regional but offensive mission once the Russians had established themselves in Tiflis: to roll back the Persians behind the Araks and the lower Kura, another moat of the empire, and the Ottomans from western Georgia. But once this was achieved in 1828-29, Russian strategy assumed a defensive posture because the war in the mountains absorbed all the energies of the high command. Only in the Orenburg Territory and in Siberia, where no field troops were stationed after 1809 (the Orenburg and Siberian separate corps consisted only of garrisons and Cossack troops) was the Russian posture defensive only: there was no enemy core area against which to assume the offensive.

What were the consequences of these developments for Russia's relationship with its client states? Sweden's defeat in 1809 was final: there would never be another Russo-Swedish war. After 1809, Russia proceeded to reorient Swedish foreign policy by encouraging Stockholm to annex Norway and forget Finland. This goal was achieved in 1814. Once they were present in Torneo and on the Åland Islands, the Russians held Stockholm at their mercy. Sweden remained what it had been for most of the period since 1725: a client state of the Russian empire.

A new Poland came into being in 1815, joined with the empire under the Romanov scepter. The experiment was interesting and unique: the Russians sought to create a client state within the imperial periphery. The government, its courts, and its parliament were Polish, and they were represented in Petersburg by a Pole. But there was no doubt that the relationship with Russia was one of complete dependence: the Polish army was commanded by the tsar's brother who resided in Warsaw, and another Russian, the Imperial Commissioner, kept a watchful eye on Polish domestic politics. Poland, like Sweden, remained a client state, but one much more subservient to Russian interests and under the constant threat of offensive deployments in Kurland and Lithuania.

Despite appearances, Prussia remained a client state. Its defeat in 1806 served Russian interests well because it threw the Prussians into Russia's arms. At Tilsit, Alexander posed as Prussia's savior while snubbing Frederick William III, and Alexander Kurakin wrote to Maria Fedorovna that Russia had become Prussia's "guardian angel."¹⁷

¹⁷ N. Shil'der, "Rossiia v eia otnosheniiakh k Evrope, 1806-1815 gg.," *Russkaia starina* (1889), vol. 1, 1-52.

Guardian angels are generous patrons and keep a close watch over their clients' interests. Prussia, it is true, remained a recalcitrant client state, harboring a streak of resentment against its guardian angel, which was only exacerbated by Prussian nationalism. Moreover, the annexation of the Rhineland gave Prussia a second industrial base, and Prussia would soon acquire the wherewithal of a great economic power. In fact, Russia facilitated this outward reorientation of Prussian foreign policy by encouraging its client to gain the Rhineland and forget the Prussian Polish provinces annexed by Russia to form Congress Poland. But Russia pointedly continued to refuse to accept Prussia as a great European power, as if to remind it of the true nature of the client relationship. What was expected of Prussia was to protect Fortress Empire against subversive influences from western Europe. Petersburg at least once reminded Berlin that it would intervene militarily should Prussia deviate from its assigned role. As to Austria, it remained a "friendly kingdom"¹⁸ because it had no choice, and the growth of the revolutionary movement in the empire made Russia the arbiter of its destiny, as would happen in 1849. Austria also was turned outward, to gain Lombardy and Venetia and forget some of the Polish provinces acquired in 1795.

Russia's grand strategy continued to make use of client societies, new as well as old. In Finland, a Swedish nobility had developed a strong esprit de corps and separatist tendencies in the course of the eighteenth century. Most of these nobles welcomed the annexation of Finland. The Russians made generous concessions, and Finland continued to live a life of its own until the end of the nineteenth century. These "Finnish Swedes" controlled the entire machinery of government and Swedish remained the official language. They fulfilled the major obligation of a client society: to administer its territory on behalf of the imperial power. The Baltic Germans remained another client society within the Imperial periphery. Despite occasional tensions, their role in administering their provinces on behalf of Petersburg was never challenged. In Georgia, the client state came to an end with the elimination of the dynasty in 1801, but a client society came into being when key members of the Georgian nobility (with the Armenian merchants) accepted Russian rule and made the contribution expected from a client society: to administer the territory and

¹⁸ The term was coined by David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King. The Character of the Client Kingship* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

supply provisions and light cavalry to the regular troops of the imperial power. They did even more: they contributed to setting the imperial agenda in Transcaucasia. Yet another client society within the empire was the Polish aristocracy in Right-Bank Ukraine, descendants of those who had welcomed the Russian invasion of 1793. Extensive marital connections existed between them and the Naryshkin-Trubetskoi kinship network, to form what I have called a "Black Sea network."¹⁹

Outside the empire, the Greeks remained a client society: their main purpose was to destabilize the Ottoman empire in the Balkans and to encourage the creation of an independent Greece that would grant the Russians naval bases in the Mediterranean. On the other side of the Caspian, the Kazakh client society was disintegrating because, like the Cossack, it had lost its *raison d'être*: to be Russia's clients against the western Mongols. But there was a new client state in the region: Persia. The assassination of the Russian embassy sent to Tehran in 1829 served Russia's interests well: Persia, forced to make amends, was overwhelmed by demonstrations of Russian power and turned outward like Sweden, Prussia, and Austria, to become Russia's *avant garde* in the advance toward Afghanistan and Russia's *glacis* against British influence.²⁰

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In the 1640s, the Romanov dynasty faced encirclement. Even if that encirclement was not specifically directed against it, because it was not coordinated and followed its own momentum beyond the sphere of immediate Russian interests, Moscow felt a potential threat to its freedom of action as it overcame the traumatic shock of the Time of Troubles. This awareness was transformed into an offensive posture which found its full development during Peter's reign.

More than twenty years of war shaped three basic principles of Russia's grand strategy. One was the determination to destroy the military and, if possible, the political capability of the core areas surrounding the Muscovite operational base. In order to achieve that

¹⁹ LeDonne, "Frontier Governor Generals, 1772-1825," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2000), 161-83.

²⁰ "Persidskoe posol'stvo v Rossii 1829 goda," *Russkii arkhiv* 1 (1889), 209-60.

goal, when circumstances allowed, Russian forces carried out deep strategic penetrations across the entire western and southern frontiers. When peace returned, Peter and the high command established as a second principle the concentrated deployment of a single mobile strategic force capable of striking out in the western and southern theaters in the event of another war. The army was withdrawn within the periphery of the core area. The prohibitive tariff of 1724 reinforced this conception of Fortress Russia, invincible to its enemies. As a corollary of this strategic withdrawal to the core area, a third principle was established: Russia must depend for its lasting security on a ring of client states and societies, some within the imperial periphery, others still beyond it.

How did these three principles evolve as Russia entered a period of hegemonic expansionism? The determination to project power over considerable distances did not change, as the interventions in Poland and the wars with Prussia and the Ottomans clearly showed. But Russia's expansion into the eastern marches of the Polish empire and to the northern shores of the Black Sea from the Dniestr to the Kuban brought about a redeployment of the army from the core to the periphery and the abandonment of the principle of concentrated deployment and of Fortress Russia. By the end of the period, most of the army was deployed in what had become the inner frontier of the empire, and several client societies and one client state had ceased to exist. Fortress Russia was slowly becoming Fortress Empire.

The third period, from 1797 to 1831, witnessed the apogee of Russia's hegemony. Never before had the Russians penetrated so deeply into Europe and never before had they been able to establish a permanent presence on the three moats: the Gulf of Bothnia, the Danube (at least its delta), and the Araks. These victories were reflected in the cult of ancient Rome, especially in the monumental architecture of Petersburg which, by 1831, had eclipsed Stockholm as the imperial capital of the eastern Baltic, a city where monster parades brought back to contemporaries echoes of the tramping of Roman legions.

The paradomania of the period was also a symptom of consolidation and retrenchment. It was the theatrical entertainment of the garrison state, of the new Fortress Empire. Peter's Fortress Russia had been a garrison state, too, but one poised to attack in any direction across the western and southern frontiers. Most of the frontier had disappeared by 1831 and become the empire's inner frontier.

Fortress Russia had expanded to become Fortress Empire. It was no coincidence that the tariff of 1822 had much in common with that of 1724: both were highly protectionist and in some cases prohibitive. In such conditions, the deployment of the army across the entire empire (excluding Orenburg and Siberia) was to be expected. It contributed mightily to the consolidation of the conservative political order imposed after 1815 with the support of the "Internal Guard" and the gendarmes stationed in every provincial capital. But as the deployment spread outward, it broke the unity of the strategic force and created regional formations with regional missions independent of any overall strategic plan. The humiliation of the Crimean War would be the logical consequence of this fragmentation, worsened beyond all expectations by the neglect of road and railroad building. Peter's dream had turned into a nightmare.