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A LIVE BORDER:
COSSACK MANEUVERS IN THE CONTEXT OF COLONIZATION
(THE LATE SIXTEENTH TO THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)†

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Abstract. The Cossacks personified a “live border” in the southern Russian periphery (ukraina), one that maneuvered between the Muscovite state, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Crimean Khanate, and the Nogai Horde. In the Field (Pole), where free and servant (sluzhilye) Cossacks came into contact, Russian military colonization moved south along Tatar routes (sakma) as part of an “expansion of defense” waged by Cossack bands, cordons, and fortresses. In the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century, Cossacks turned their expansion back toward Moscow, and the “live border” struck the capital. By sponsoring and supporting false tsars, Cossacks both disrupted and compelled the Muscovite state from 1605 to 1611. They played a key role in Mikhail Romanov’s election, though a remarkable status reversal immediately occurred as a result: by swearing an oath to Romanov, the free Cossacks found themselves in the tsar’s service.

Keywords: Cossacks, border, colonization, false tsar, Moscow Tsardom, ukraina, Crimea.

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ЖИВАЯ ГРАНИЦА: КАЗАЧЬИ МАНЕВРЫ В ПРОСТРАНСТВЕ КОЛОНИЗАЦИИ (РУБЕЖ XVI–XVII ВВ.)

Аннотация. Казаки олицетворяли «живую границу» на южнорусской украйне, маневрируя между Московским царством, Речью Посполитой, Крымским ханством и Ногайской ордой. В Поле, где сталкивались вольные и служилые казаки, русская военная колонизация продвигалась на юг вдоль татарских дорог (сақм) как «экспансия обороны» силами казачьих станиц, сторож и острогов. В Смуту начала XVII в. экспансия казаков повернула вспять, и «живая граница» захлестнула столицу. Выдвигая и поддерживающая самозванцев, казаки за семь лет (1605–1611 гг.) разрушили и подчинили Московское царство. Они же сыграли ключевую роль в избрании Романова на царство, но тут же произошла статусная метаморфоза — присягнув своему избраннику, вольные казаки оказались на государевой службе.

Ключевые слова: казаки, граница, колонизация, самозванство, Московское царство, украйна, Крым.

In Russian, there still exists the old meaning of the word kazachit’ (‘to cossack’): to live and serve on the side. For example, in the Pomor dialects, “to go to the Cossacks” means to go into seasonal labor, which does not exclude servitude. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries robbers of the ukraina (borderland), Tatars in the Russian service, homeless workers, runaway slaves, strangers, and others, were referred to as Cossacks. Cossacks of the Field implied freedom and willfulness. Some Cossacks were called “thieves,” others “servicemen,” although in fact their roles usually took turns. Since the rule of Tsar Peter, Cossacks formed a regular army and became faithful servants to their sovereign, often performing police functions. As we can see, the range of the Cossacks’ activities is impressively extensive, requiring high mobility and adaptability. The Cossack way of life does not only include war and robbery, but also a host of activities to ensure security, rapid exchange of information, livelihood, and, at times, prosperity. The Cossacks’ ability to perform a variety of independent and decisive action developed in the turbulent borderlands made them an efficient tool of Russian colonization.
Tatar Trail

The Turkic word *Cossack* originally had the meaning a “runaway or wild horse” (Blagova 1970, 144–145). The Kipchak verb *cazaclia* (to wander, to live freely, to be a Cossack) meant the “temporary status of a swashbuckling fellow, seceded from his kin, who lived a warrior’s life in the wilderness” under the command of *ataman*, an “organizer of raids on close neighbors and campaigns to distant lands” (Kliashtorny, Savinov 2005, 58). Even khans who lost the struggle for power and were deprived of their lands could “go Cossack;” many khans and sultans had their “Cossacks days.”

The first mention of the Cossacks in the Polovets *Codex Cumanicus* dictionary (1303) and *Sugdan Synaxarion* (1308) characterize them as “guards.” In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Armenians and Turks were listed among the Cossacks (guard troops) of Tana and Kaffa in Crimea, while Russian Cossacks appeared later (Karpov 2012). In the fifteenth century “Horde Cossacks” referred to Tatars who wandered regardless of the khans and made independent raids on Moscow’s domains (Gorskii 2005, 180). Cossacks (probably Tatars) are mentioned in the Crimean horde since 1474, in the Volga horde since 1492, in the Kazan khanate since 1491, in Astrakhan khanate since 1502, and in Azov since 1499 (Sukhorukov 1903, 3). “The Tatars referred to as Cossacks the third and the lowest division of their army, which consisted of lancers, princes, and Cossacks” (Solov’ev 1989, 305).

Since the time of Karamzin and Boltin it has been commonly believed that Russia borrowed the word *Cossack* from the Horde tax collectors, who rode across “Russian ulus” accompanied by Cossack guards. Tatar stems are found in Cossack military vocabulary: *ataman* (leader), *esaul* (assistant ataman), *karaul* (guard), *ertaul* (reconnaissance unit), *seunch* (news of the victory), and others. Cossacks are mentioned for the first time in Russia in 1444, when they, along with the princely troops, drove Tatar Sultan Mustafa from Riazan’. These Cossacks could be Tatars from Sultan Qasim’s entourage. In the Duchy of Moscow, “Gorodets Cossacks” were in the Kasimov princes’ retinues. In the fifteenth century Cossacks are mentioned more and more often, including the service of the Tatar nobility (for example, Satylgan, son of the Crimean Khan Meñli I Giray).

N. M. Karamzin presented Don Cossacks as “people who speak our language, profess our faith, and whose countenances are a mixture of European and Asian features” (2003, vol. 2, 149–150). Among their atamans were Tatars who fit the Tatar-Russian tradition of “hordism” (see Golovnev 2015, 231–81). For example, in a 1549 letter to Ivan IV, the Nogai Prince Iusuf mentions Saryazman: “Thy serf, a certain man called Saryazman, built forts on the Don in three or four places, and he ambushes our ambassadors and other people who go up to you and back, captures them, and beats some to death... That same year our people,
after trading in Rus’, were returning back, and on the Voronezh one of thy people—named Saryazman—thy rogue, came and took them.” The Tatars were a part of the Don Cossacks even later. For example, in 1589 a baptized Crimean Tatar went to the Don and served the sovereign of Moscow there for fifteen years: “... the people of the Crimea he defeated and to the Crimean people and ulus brought war with the Don Cossacks, then from the Don went to Putivl’” (Kliuchevskii 1988, 100).

It is paradoxical that the Russian border against the Tatars was being constructed by the Tatars themselves. While the actions of some Tatars (Horde, Crimean) sparked the need for greater defense, other Tatars (Moscow, Kasimov) helped to construct this defense. The first barrage on the Oka was established by Tatar princes under Vasilii the Dark and supplemented by regular mounted reconnaissance (ertaul) under Vasilii III. Initially it was technically mobile and mounted, which resulted in the appearance of the frontier Cossacks. Cossacks represented a “live frontier,” which they guarded, inhabited, crossed, violated, and, ultimately, personified. The steppe borderland was so extensive and politically tense that every once in a while an independent polity arose (horde, principality, sich). To some extent, these border communities copied the foundations of surrounding powers and mixed them in their practical use.

The main factor in the formation of the Muscovite borders in the south was Crimea, which raided Muscovy and in parallel encouraged her independent policy.¹ It was largely Crimea that created the Field as a large and restless borderland, and it was the confrontation with Crimea that gave rise to the “live border” of Russia: Cossacks. In the sixteenth century Crimean Tatars raided Muscovy with meticulous regularity, considering steppe and forest steppe between the Dnieper and the Don their summer camping grounds. Protection against the Tatars was mainly reconnaissance along major roads, especially the Muravskii Trail that led from the Crimean Perekop to Tula. The growth and movement of the “live border” can be seen in the tactics of defending Moscow from the Horde raids.

Cossacks and servicemen at the border settlements and outposts kept watch over Tatar trails in the sixteenth century. They guarded the ridge (prairie watersheds), roads, river crossings, and also raided the steppe and seized “tongues,” i.e. captives who could reveal valuable information (Liubavskii 1996, 297). The deeper the Cossack exploration, the more alarming were the Tatars’ own raids, for skillful reconnaissance could turn their raid into a roundup, the only thing that seriously scared the nomads.

Unlike the nomadic hordes producing fast patrols around it, Russian military organization was territorial, and Russian patrols needed fortified

¹ According to N. M. Karamzin, friendship between Ivan III and the Crimean Khan Meñli I Giray, “hastened the death of the Grand, or the Golden Horde and distracted the forces of Poland, clearly contributing to the greatness of Russia” (Karamzin, 2003, vol. 1, 693).
outposts. Each new fort, with its network of villages and watchtowers, was a step toward a more profound defense, and the consistent promotion of forts along the trails toward Tatars marked the advance of military colonization. Reconnaissance patrols prepared the grounds for a new fort, which became an outpost of defense and support for further movement along the high road. In the middle of the sixteenth century the advance of military colonization marked itself on the upper Oka along the Muravskii Trail by Dedilov (1553), Bolkhov (1556) and Orel (1566) fortresses, and in the upper reaches of the Don along the Nogai Trail by Shatsk (1553) and Dankov (1563) fortresses. At first a newly made fort served as a military camp, which had a stockade, a rampart, and a moat. Within a few years, after subduing the neighborhood, the fort developed into a town of log buildings. The fort’s garrison was commanded by a golova (warchief), the town garrison by a voevoda (warlord). A. I. Papkov followed the sequence of the synchronous events in the Field and in Siberia in the 1590s (2004, 81).

Thus, initially the colonization of the southern Russian borderland had defensive motives. This tactic of increasing defense was largely spontaneous, as each fort immediately released a network of outposts. In turn, these outposts, in controlling the new sites of the Field, found advantageous positions for more supporting points where they prepared places for new forts. As a result, through moving the outposts toward the enemy, military (mostly Cossack) colonization of the Field carried on. Step by step, following the reconnaissance units, the live border crept south, widening and strengthening its rear with new settlements.

However, the expansion of the borders of Muscovy was not a mere involuntary “expansion of defense.” Ivan III already claimed to return the possessions of Riurik, including Novgorod and Lithuanian lands, and Ivan IV considered himself the heir of the king’s (khan’s) right to possess the Tatar lands. Cossacks as a live border were very responsive to the monarchy’s condition and mood, at times pulling away from her, at times protecting her, at times paving her way.

A Precarious Ukraina

After the Mongol invasion, the world turned upside down. The southern borders of Russia became the northern edge of the Horde. Borderland steppe and forest remained an edge, but of another metropolitan area. In this era, the Tatarians possessed the ukraina (borderland), using it as pastureland for their herds with small agricultural inclusions (e.g. Bolokhov land), thus provisioning the Horde. With the collapse of the Khanate, ukraina became a territory of rivalry and contention, claimed in one way or another by not only the nomadic hordes, but also Lithuania, Moscow, Poland, Hungary, and Moldavia. The surrounding powers tried to include the South-Russian borderland in their
orbits, not as an independent country, but as a field of competitive strategies and cross colonization.

Essentially the South-Russian borderland represented the converging margins of neighboring countries, and the diversity of this borderland (ukraina) communities reflected these cross-border contacts. For example, Galicia was predominantly a Lithuanian-Polish region, Transcarpathia—Hungarian (the so-called Hungarian Ukraine), Budjak—Turkish (Budjak Cossacks served Turkey up to 1808), Sloboda—Russian (though with a heavy Circassian component). In 1546 the governor of Putivl’ Prince Mikhailo Troekurov informed the Grand Duke: “Now, sire, there are a great many Cossacks and Circassians and Kiyans in the Field, and your people, sir, went to the field from all of the ukrainas” (cited in Sukhorukov 1903, 3). The composition of the Cossacks shows the dominance of one or another state in the Field: in the fifteenth century Tatar Cossacks dominated, while in the sixteenth century they were ousted by Ukrainian (Lithuanian) and Russian (Moscow) Cossacks. Geographically, the Cossacks who filled the steppes between the Carpathians and the Altai with the decline of the Horde can be divided into three distinct ethnic areas: (1) Russian on the Don; (2) Ukrainian on the Dnieper; and (3) Turkic in Crimea, Azov, the Kipchak steppe, and Transoxiana. The first formed the Russian Cossacks, the second—the Zaporizhian and Ukrainian, and the third (between Aral and Balkhash)—the Kazakhs. Terek and Greben Cossacks, who appeared in the late sixteenth century, joined Kabardians, Chechens, Kumyk, Nogai, Georgians, Armenians, and Circassians (see Blagova 1970; Averin 2003, 118–119).

Cossack community only looked monolithic, but inside was a melting pot of different mannerisms, interests, and ideas. With its outcast and rebellious origins, Cossack freemen often provoked conflicts. Due to their border location, the Cossacks focused on conflict in their outside affairs, delving into the controversy and intrigue between neighboring powers, turning to one side, then to another, or even to multiple sides at a time. This turbulence formed a sort of borderland mentality, in which maneuver prevailed over consistency. The Cossacks could serve several rulers at once, easily changing allies and enemies. This did not reflect a precariousness in their views, but rather the realities of border life.

According to A. I. Papkov, in the late sixteenth century Russians and Ukrainians, “collided in the Field as the subjects of warring states.” These two streams of the Field’s colonization, Russian and Ukrainian, were distinguished by the fact that “Russian colonization was predominantly governmental and relied on government-built town-forts and armies forming in the region,” while its Ukrainian counterpart was spontaneous, in part supported by Polish landowners, with the state involved primarily to prevent the resettlement of Circassians (Papkov 2004, 91, 109).
Other habits and actions of Russian and Ukrainian Cossacks complemented rather than contrasted with each other. This also applies to the particular Cossack business of freelance service to the rulers of neighboring countries, including Moscow, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Turkey, Crimea, and the Nogai khanate. This service provided income and conveniently allowed them to use the name of the ruler for their own robbers’ profits. At the same time Cossacks created a kind of circular threat, being both their defender and assailant: while one branch of the Cossacks indulged in robbery in the steppes of the Dnieper, the Don, and the Iaik, and was dubbed “thieves,” another part was listed as “servicemen” and chased the thieves.

In the borderline colonization of Muscovy, robber soldiers engaged in “plowing” other states’ boundaries, after which the sovereign’s people settled the area, bringing their own orders and forcing the Cossacks and Circassians to distant “virgin” borders (e.g. Siberia). Muscovy used Cossacks for crashing borders, while professing her noninvolvement in the robberies of her good neighbors: the Porte, the Crimean Khanate, and the Nogai Horde.

Adventurism, daring, agility, and marginality of “borderland people” together gave a strong impetus to colonization. Cossacks, even as outcasts and rebels, were a kind of byproduct of the country and communicated with her. The more rogues the country expelled, the vaster borderline territories they assimilated. Crossing the border, “the odd men” made way for the state to follow. Thus the internal tensions in the country stimulated expansion. At the same time, another tendency developed: the sprawling frontier harbored seeds of turmoil.

**Time of Troubles**

By the seventeenth century the Cossack border surrounding Muscovy on all sides was not just live, but also swollen. The freemen on the Dnieper, the Don, the Volga, and the Iaik significantly expanded the geography of their raids. In the 1580s Volga and Iaik Cossacks pressed the Nogai Horde, founding the town of Uralsk in 1584. Meanwhile, part of the Don Cossacks moved to Terek, forming the Terek army, while a portion of the Volga Cossacks moved to the Stroganovs Urals and then to Siberia. On the southern Russian borderlands the freemen formed a powerful Cossack zone bonded by steppe roads, including Hetman Trail between the Dnieper and the Don.

Under Boris Godunov, Cossacks were forbidden to appear in Russian towns and cities, especially in Moscow, and those who violated the “commandment” were put in jail (Sukhorukov 1903, 64; Stanislavskii 1990, 16). Cossacks posed a threat for both the state and the state’s enemies. Some independent quasi-polities developed in the Field among the Cossacks and the Don people, who gained some experience in raids on
neighboring countries and “smelled power.” Cossacks of the Dnieper, the Don, and the Urals were tied to Muscovy and to each other through Orthodoxy, but they still clearly separated themselves from the Muscovites and would not abjure robbery of Russian villages and Orthodox monasteries.

Borderland freemen had freedom of maneuver, including in politics. Cossacks gained experience in alternate or simultaneous service in Muscovy, Poland, Turkey, and the Horde. Contrasting themselves to the state, they learned to play with authority and power. However, they regarded the game of power as a kind of adventure full of excitement and daring. Hence, it is no mere coincidence that Cossacks were the main players in the impostors’ game.

Historians have long paid attention to the special role of Cossacks in the nomination and support of impostors. According to A. L. Stanislavskii, “one of the most active estates that participated in the social struggle of the Time of Troubles, was the Cossacks” (1990, 2). R. G. Skrynnikov has noted “the importance of the participation of the Zaporizhian Cossacks in the initial stage of False Dmitrii’s campaign against Moscow” (1997, 389–400). According to A. I. Papkov, “the population of the borderline supported the impostor.” He writes, “Circassians, as a rule, were the soldiers of the Pretender or of the Commonwealth” (2004, 111–114, 129). According to I. O. Tiumentsev, “the local Cossacks stood at the origins of impostors’ intrigue in the northwest, southwest, and south.” He notes that “False Dmitrii III, as well as False Peter, False Dmitrii II, etc., was a typical ‘Cossack pretender’” (2010, 120–121). Hungarian specialist in Russian studies D. Svak is the most resolute about the relationship between imposture and the Cossacks: “I argue that the phenomenon of imposture was not only supported by the Cossacks in the course of its operation, but was a primarily Cossack invention at the time of its occurrence... The bulk of the social base for the impostors was always the Cossacks, who themselves were willing to put forth their false prince... The Cossacks needed the impostors... and did not hesitate to promote from their own ranks” (2010, 47–52).

Imposture is considered a historical curiosity and a painful reaction to the tyranny of Ivan the Terrible by the people of Muscovy. K. V. Chistov sees it as a fulfillment of a people’s utopia, the myth of the return of the king-deliverer (1967, 29). However, we can also look at it as a trick of the borderland people. If Muscovy subjects were inclined to believe in the absurd, the borderland people were the generator of this absurdity, which turned the idea of ghost kings into a technique.

Future False Dmitrii I, after escaping from the capital, was met with enthusiasm in the borderline. Prior to this moment the impostor had unsuccessfully sought support from the head of the Polish Orthodox Party Prince K. Ostrog, then with the chief of the Arians Pan G. Goisiki, and finally in liaisons among the Ukrainian and Don Cossacks. It was the
Cossacks who saw Grigorii Otrep’ev as “the red sun,” the true tsar returning like risen Christ. During its march to Moscow, False Dmitrii’s army grew through the addition of Cossacks. At Sevsk he was joined by a unit of 12,000 Don Cossacks. In an emergency, after suffering a defeat by Muscovy troops, the impostor took refuge behind the walls of Putivl’, and it was again the Ukrainian and Don Cossacks who kept him from fleeing to Poland. However, False Dmitrii entered Moscow with a retinue of boyars and the Poles, awarding and releasing the Cossacks back home. Lingering Cossacks “irritated Muscovites” with their arrogance: “they showed a clear contempt and referred to the locals scornfully as Jews [zhydy].”

“Emperor Demetrius” (Demetreus Imperator) did not forget the ukraina’s merit and canceled taxes for a decade in southern Russia, which caused grumbling in other areas of Muscovy, Cossacks in their own way patronized the impostor, taking care of his family and giving birth to the tsar’s “nephew” Peter (a never existing son of Fedor Ivanovich). False Peter was more an elect of the Cossack circle than an impostor. For the role of the false prince, Terek Cossack ataman Fedor Bodyrin had his eye on two young chura Cossacks (servants): the son of a Murom townsman Ileika and the son of an Astrakhan strelets Mitia. The circle selected Ileika Muromets because he had been in Moscow and had an epic nickname. Prior to joining the Terek Cossacks Ileika was the runaway serf Korovin, an illegitimate orphan, a cook on merchant ships, and a seller of apples and shoes at the Astrakhan market. Ataman Bodyrin’s trick, according to interrogations, was intended to summon Cossack payment assigned by the merciful tsar and detained by wicked boyars: “And so it was said among Cossacks: ‘The Sire, he wished to grant us, but the evil nobles, they spend our payment, so they do not give us our earnings’” (Perri 2010, 69). The circle notified False Dmitrii about his “nephew Peter” and in response received the order for the “nephew” and his mates “to go to Moscow in haste.” En route, at Sviiazhsk, the Cossacks caught news of the murder of the pretender in Moscow on May 17, 1606. False Peter himself assured that he arrived in Moscow the day after the death of False Dmitrii, on May 18.

Ataman Bodyrin’s statement provides a motive for the march to Moscow “for the tribute.” Apparently, it was not even the delayed payment (although the Cossacks “incessantly” demanded it), but claims to participate in managing the affairs and wealth of Muscovy. False Dmitrii, who was obligated to the Cossacks for his accession, left them behind,

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2 Sukhorukov 1903, 68; Stanislavskii 1990, 20.

3 According to the Terek Cossacks, Tsar Fedor and Tsarina Irina had a son, Peter, who at birth was changed for daughter Feodosiia (see Sukhorukov 1903, 68).

4 The word “chura” was adopted by Cossacks from the Tatar word for “servant” or “junior mate” (Stanislavskii 1990, 8).
indulging instead in relationships with the Moscow nobility and the Poles. The Cossacks needed Prince Peter to remind Tsar Dmitrii of his “kinship” obligations and gain access to Moscow.

With the death of False Dmitrii, Ileika-Peter again became an orphan. The former scenario exhausted, the group around Vasilii Shuiskii seized power in Moscow and cursed the impostor. Ataman Bodyrin remained out of the game, and False Peter was picked up by a new group of conspirators, “thieving nobles,” who were in opposition to Shuiskii. Putivl’ voivode Prince Grigorii Shakhovskoi spread the word that Tsar Dmitrii escaped, sheltered False Peter, and let the Terek and Volga Cossacks who rushed to his aid into town. Ivan Bolotnikov’s army also began to form in Putivl’, while in Poland, the search for another False Dmitrii continued.

Meanwhile, the Cossack borderland continued to spawn new false princes. Only three “princes” showed up in Astrakhan in summer 1606: Ivan Avgust, Lavr, and Osinovik, but by spring 1607 their number increased to a dozen (the Don, the Volga, the Terek and Zaporozh’e settlements saw “princes” Fedor, Klementii, Savelii, Semen, Vasilii, Eroshka, Gavrila, Martynka). The “children and grandchildren” of Ivan the Terrible seemed even more numerous as imposture became a trend among the Cossacks. “False kinghood” was not just a fun, but also a new business for the Cossacks at that time; now the bordermen made predatory raids in the name of the tsar. In addition, the Cossack “polyarchy” ideologically became the token of their superiority over the kingdom. In fact, what Cossacks claimed was not the “legitimacy” of false princes, as some law-abiding historians have argued, but rather the establishment of the Wild Field law in lawless Muscovy.

The Don ataman Ivan Zarutskii, by faking the Putivl’ oath (with the participation of Starodub) to the next pretender, False Dmitrii II, accompanied him to Moscow (Tushino). The price of this Cossack triumph “was the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian and Cossack bandit gangs virtually divided the empire among themselves” (Svak 2010, 44). Cossack “princes” (first Fedor, then Ivan Avgust and Lavrentii) hurried to join their “uncle,” who at first welcomed them, then “ordered them whipped,” “thrown into jail” and executed. Later the same fate befell seven other borderland impostors. Hetman Prince Roman Rozhinskii exposed and executed the “princes” and passed their troops to Cossack voivodes Ivan Zarutskii and Aleksander Lisovskii.

By the end of his reign, False Dmitrii II almost completely relied on the Cossacks, unleashing the massacre of Polish prisoners, who were drowned according to the Cossack tradition in bags “in sack and in water.” At the same time the Cossacks were scattered throughout Muscovy, receiving villages and towns from the impostor “to feed on.” In October 1608 ataman K. Miliaev collected wine from the royal villages near Pereiaslavl’; in January 1609 “Volodimer was given to Cossacks to feed on;” and in 1611 many taverns in Riazan’ uezd were leased to Cossacks,
and Solovetskii monastery accepted the service of seventy “martial Cossacks” led by two atamans (Stanislavskii 1990, 27, 30, 47, 82).

Shortly after the death of False Dmitrii II, False Dmitrii III, “the thief of Pskov,” appeared, this time in the north of Russia, but under the same Cossack scenario. “The new delusion” was started by a Cossack (or the son of a deacon, bound to the Cossacks) Sidorka, who traded knives in Velikii Novgorod, and in spring 1611 entered the city with “a hundred mounted mates in debauchery,” “thieves and rogues like himself,” and declared himself once again “the miraculously survived Tsar Dmitrii.” The people of Novgorod reacted to the miracle rather coldly and the party of “Novgorod Cossack scum” moved to Ivangorod, where they were “regaled with salute and celebrations for many days” (Tiumentsev 2010, 119–120).

Thus, in seven years (1605–1611) free Cossacks conquered Muscovy, promoting and supporting impostors and subjugating the country. In the Time of Troubles the Don was depopulated; all the Cossacks moved to Moscow. As noted by M. K. Liubavskii, Don freemen “poured into the Muscovite state as long as sovereignty there decomposed and the Troubles began. Cossacks dispersed across the inland areas of the country and the Don... lay empty” (1996, 314). Advancing and supporting false tsars and princes, Cossacks marched across Muscovy. Under False Dmitrii I they entrenched Putivl’, under False Peter they entered Tula, under False Dmitrii II they came to Moscow, and under False Dmitrii III they reached Pskov.

**Return to the Borderland**

Romanovs owe their elevation to the Troubles. Filaret became Metropolitan in Rostov under False Dmitrii I, and the patriarch under False Dmitrii II. S. F. Platonov did not rule out the possibility that Filaret Romanov, along with his brethren and relatives, was no stranger to the intrigues of imposture. Not without reason at the time G. Otrep’ev “lived in the Romanovs’ estate” (1910, 233–234). The “Tushino patriarch” led the embassy, which offered Muscovy to the Catholic Wladislaw. The patriarch’s son Mikhail Romanov was among the boyars who swore allegiance to “Tsar Vladislav.”

The election of Mikhail to the throne was another triumph for the Cossacks. It was the Cossacks who surrounded Moscow with encampments and who rejected applicants of royal blood, such as the Polish Prince Wladyslaw (already proclaimed as the Russian tsar) and the Swedish Duke Charles Philip (advocated by Prince Pozharskii). After the murder of Procopii Liapunov on July 22, 1611, Cossack troops captured Moscow. On the eve of the Zemskii Sobor there were far more of them in Moscow than the nobility (over ten thousand). “Cossacks walked in Moscow in crowds,” according to “The Story of the Zemskii Sobor in 1613.” On the day of the election, February 21, 1613, the Cossacks set a
“maidan” in Moscow, burst into the Council Hall, and insisted on the election of Mikhail: “the Cossacks and the mob did not depart from the Kremlin until the Duma and zemstvo officials swore allegiance on the same day.” On April 13, 1613, Swedish scouts reported from Moscow that the Cossacks elected Mikhail Romanov against the boyars’ will, forcing Trubetskoi and Pozharskii to consent to the nomination after a siege of their households. Jacques Margeret wrote to King James I in 1613 that the Cossacks chose “this child” to manipulate him and that the majority of Russian society would be pleased to welcome the English army, as it had been living in constant fear of the Cossacks (see Stanislavskii 1990, 84–89). The Poles had every reason to call Mikhail Romanov a “Cossack protégé.” Essentially Mikhail was the same type of a “Cossack tsar” as False Dmitrii, except for the fact that he was approved by the Sobor.

The election of Mikhail Romanov was the peak in power for the bordermen in Muscovy. However, it was also the moment of metamorphosis in the status of free Cossacks. Sworn to their chosen one, they suddenly found themselves “at the service of the sovereign.” Mikhail called for the liberators of Moscow to show their “initial service and zeal” and promised to endow them “according to... their service.” In 1613 the Cossack order was created and the Moscow government began to convert the free Cossacks into “instrumental” servicemen with permanent residence, for example in Putivl’ or Oskol. The tsar’s charter was sent to the Don, “brimming with tenderness and praise,” which encouraged the Cossacks “to stand up for tsar, country and Orthodox faith.” The tsar’s banner was soon sent to the Don Cossacks to approve “their zeal for Russia.”

The decline of the Cossack freedom is delineated in the fate of ataman Ivan Zarutskii. Ally of the three “Tsar Dmitriis”, he came to Moscow with the False Dmitrii I, served as a voivode to False Dmitrii II, and swore allegiance to the False Dmitrii III. According to R. G. Skrynnikov, Zarutskii possessed all the qualities of the popular leader, impressing contemporaries with his handsomeness, intelligence, and courage (1987, 198). It is not clear, however, what people he was the leader of. Zarutskii was born in Galicia, spent his childhood in Turkish slavery, and became an ataman on the Don, voivode and boyar in Muscovy. Russian historiography describes him as vacillating, if not politically omnivorous (due to his switched loyalties from False Dmitrii II to Żółkiewski, then to Liapunov, False Dmitrii III, and hetman Chodkiewicz). However, in the chaos of the Troubles the previous government was gone and its confused and scattered “people” was tormented by different leaders. Zarutskii headed and represented the Cossacks as a military leader and a strong force during the Troubles, and was a consistent supporter of the Cossack idea of imposture. Faithful to this idea, he

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5 Sukhorukov 1903, 76–82; Stanislavskii 1990, 8, 19, 91–96.
considered it “service to the people.” In this sense, he did his duty responsibly. He took under his guardianship (and to his bed) the widow of two False Dmitriiis Marina Mniszek and her baby son Ivan (the “Little Thief”). As one of the leaders of the first militia Zarutskii, on the behalf of the Cossacks, opposed the zemstvo, and defeated and killed its leader Liapunov. As the second militia leader, he lost his position to Prince Dmitrii Pozharskii and then the Sobor election of the tsar, where he unsuccessfully supported the Little Thief in opposition to Mikhail Romanov. However, no one knew at that time that Romanov’s fate would be very different from that of the other “Trouble elects” (Godunov, Shuiskii, False Dmitrii, Wladislaw). Chased by Riazan’ troops under voivode Miron Veliaminov and the Tatar army under Sviiazhsk Prince Aklym Tugushev, the ataman retreated to the ukraine, losing Cossack villages behind him. Hiding first in Astrakhan, then on the Iaik, Zarutskii counted on continued Cossack unrest and support from Nogai. However, Moscow returned to power, and ataman Zarutskii remained in limbo. In the summer of 1614 he was captured, brought to Moscow, and impaled; and Little Thief was hanged.

The defeat of ataman Zarutskii signaled the retreat of the Cossacks, or rather their return to normal. After the death of False Dmitriii III and disappearance of False Dmitriii IV, imposture seemed exhausted, or rather subsided together with the Cossacks to the borderline from which it had come from. In the following decades impostors appeared infrequently and outside Russia. In the 1630–40s Ivan Luba and Ivan Vergun, both under the name of “Prince Ivan” (son of False Dmitrii II and Marina Mniszek) showed up in Poland and Turkey; two “sons” of Vasilii Shuiskii also appeared abroad, and so on (Perri 2010, 72, 85).

In world history, Russia probably holds the first place in imposture. However, not only Muscovy was affected by this at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. False kings showed up on the other side of Europe: False Sebastians in Portugal, false hospodars in Moldova (Svak 2010, 48–49). Nowhere else, however, was the avalanche of imposture so strong and devastating as in Muscovy, and a major role in this drama was played by Cossacks. The collapse of central power sowed confusion among the subject people, while untying the hands of independent people, and the Cossack anarchy turned into quasi-monarchy. In the turmoil of a political

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6 Malicious rumors suggested that the father of the “prince” was Zarutskii himself. According to other rumors, the ataman famously combined eroticism and politics, at a difficult time offering the widow to the harem of Nogai murza Iashterek.

7 Another “Tsar Dmitrii” appeared in 1611 in Astrakhan, the fourth in the row of false tsars; he was accepted as the tsar in the lower Volga, but disappeared in early 1612.
crisis rogues always take the advantage of law-abiding citizens due to self-organization, even in its “rogue” form. In the Troubles of the early seventeenth century, the Cossack expansion turned inland, and the “live border” swept the capital.

In political terms, a large borderland is pregnant with great turmoil. In colonization bordermen sometimes exhibit unexpected ambition. Cossacks, recent rogues, in the Troubles felt themselves the arbiters of the fate of the metropolis, creators of new kingdoms, and conquerors of new spaces. “The live border” became a quasi-monarchy, spawning a polyarchy. Cossacks invented kings for Muscovy and played with power far beyond its borders. We can only guess who they pretended to be in the Siberian and Iaik yurts. However, large gains are impossible without big ambitions, and imposture syndrome did not only become a satellite of the Troubles, but also the stimulus for expansion.

*Translated from Russian by Alexander M. Amatov*

**References**


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TURKISH PRISONERS OF WAR IN THE BELGOROD PROVINCE DURING THE RUSSIAN-TURKISH WAR OF 1768–74

Vitalii V. Poznakhirev
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Abstract. This article examines the role of the Belgorod Province in the evacuation and internment of enemy POWs during the Russian-Turkish War of 1768–74. The author quantifies the number of the POWs, indicates their quartering sites and placement difficulties; examines financial, material, and other questions regarding their provision, and explores their daily lived experience. He concludes that the Belgorod Province authorities made a significant contribution to the improvement of both the process and legislative framework for the naturalization of former Turkish prisoners in Russia.

Keywords: Russian-Turkish War, Belgorod Province, prisoners of war, the Turks, internment, provision, prisoner transfer, naturalization.

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ТУРЕЦКИЕ ВОЕННОПЛЕННЫЕ В БЕЛГОРОДСКОЙ ГУБЕРНИИ В ПЕРИОД РУССКО-ТУРЕЦКОЙ ВОЙНЫ 1768–1774 гг.

Аннотация. В статье раскрываются роль и значение Белгородской губернии в эвакуации и интернировании военнопленных противника в период русско-турецкой войны 1768–1774 гг. Автор приводит количественный состав пленных; называет пункты их расквартирования и дает обзор трудностей, с которыми сталкивались...
власти Белгородской губернии при решении данного вопроса; освещает вопросы финансового, вещевого и иных видов обеспечения османских пленников, а также некоторые аспекты повседневной жизни военнопленных. Особо подчеркивается вклад руководства губернии в совершенствование как законодательной базы, так и порядка натурализации в России бывших турецких военнопленных.

Ключевые слова: русско-турецкая война, Белгородская губерния, военнопленные, турки, интернирование, обеспечение, этапирование, натурализация.

In September 1769, the Military Collegium informed the Belgorod governor of its decision to send captive Turks and Tatars from the general assembly point for POWs in Kiev “to Voronezh, Belgorod, Vladimir, and Novokhopersk fortress in parties of fifty to one hundred people by the most convenient routes, allowing up to five hundred people in each place, with an equal number in each place, where they (except for women and small children) are to be used in fortification and community works.”

Besides the fact that this decision was made only a year after the outbreak of the war with Turkey, it seems that it was not based on a preliminary agreement with the authorities of Belgorod Province and, moreover, was a complete surprise for them. Characteristic in this regard is the report of the commander from October 6, 1769. Assuring the collegium that Belgorod will take as many POWs as required, he then tried to immediately disavow his own statement, stressing that:

- “the town has burned down,” and the surviving buildings “are being rebuilt according to the plan; adding Turks and Tatars there would make it extremely cramped;”
- although there is a prison in town, it only has two log cabins;
- the proximity of the town to the Ukrainian front requires enhanced escort for the prisoners, whereas “nearly all of the garrison battalion is dispersed on different missions so that the remaining troops change guards only every three and sometimes every four weeks.”

Even so, the collegium remained relentless and, confirming its previous decision, demanded that the commander “make every effort” to accommodate the prisoners. The only thing it conceded was the agreement

1 Apart from women and children, officers were also excused from the works.


to consider the transfer of the Turks and Tatars to some other towns of the province in the event that “the multitude (of POWs—V.P.) would cause untenable overcrowding.”

On December 17 (other sources date it as December 19 or 22), 1769, one hundred prisoners arrived in Belgorod for permanent quartering, and seventy-five more on January 11. The first thing the authorities in Russian cities encountered in such cases was the lack of an interpreter. However, it seems that this problem had been considered in advance in Belgorod, as from the very first day of the prisoners’ arrival, a local craftsman, Ivan Panfilov, himself a former Turkish prisoner who had converted to Orthodoxy and remained in the province after the previous Russian-Turkish War of 1735–39, was put in charge of the prisoners. The governor of Belgorod A. M. Fliverk used his authority to set a salary for the interpreter, as it was not provided by any regulations, and convinced the Military Collegium to accept his decision. He argued that Ivan Panfilov, who now lacked the time to engage in his craft, was “in extreme need of subsistence.” He noted that in addition to his direct duties, Ivan “teaches willing prisoners to profess the Greek faith, and is qualified to do so as a long-time resident in Russia; it is utterly impossible to get by without him.”

Much more acute in Belgorod was the problem of quartering the POWs. In accordance with the law and practice of those years, they were placed in the city jail, together with the convicts. However, due to the continuous influx of new parties of Turks and Tatars, the facility’s capacity was quickly exhausted. The situation deteriorated further due to a somewhat specific approach to the distribution of POWs by “the staff” of the Kiev Governor-General, which is clear from the data in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of internment</th>
<th>Number of POWs</th>
<th>In % of the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgorod</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>49.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voronezh</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novokhopersk</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>18.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>14.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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By July 1770 the governor was forced to ask the Military Collegium to suspend the internment of Turks to Belgorod. For some time, the influx of prisoners to the city ceased, and some prisoners were even transferred to other regions. However, in fall 1770, the system “came full circle.” On November 6, 141 POWs arrived in town, and on November 22, 90 more appeared, who were put in jail “with great difficulty,” due to the “consolidation” of the Russian convicts. On November 25, the commander of the town reported to the governor that “Turk and Arab captives contained in Belgorod amount to 357 people and, due to the lack of barracks, are greatly cramped and many spend the night in the jail yard. Owing to the current rainy season, they suffer from cold and exhaustion, and constantly ask through the interpreter for reconsideration.” The commander then expressed concerns that in the coming winter, the situation will deteriorate and the prisoners “may, God forbid, come to sickness from the damp and stale air.”

At precisely that moment in November 1770, without getting permission from the Military Collegium for a partial transfer of prisoners to other cities, A. M. Fliverk used his authority to distribute groups of forty-fifty Turks to Kursk, Korocha, Karpov and Oboian’. Later, the list expanded to other settlements in the province.

Despite this action, the harshness of the “accommodation problem” only somewhat waned in mid-1772 after Russian annexation of Crimea, when the Military Collegium demanded the removal of POW status from all Crimean Tatars and Tatars of the Budjak, Edisan, Edikul, and Jumbalat hordes, and “their escort back to their homes, along with standard reimbursement for food.” Even earlier, in late 1771, the same decision was made with regard to captured Turkish Armenians, Greeks, and Jews, who were instructed to be sent for settlement in Kremenchug.

However, as shown in Table 2, by July 10, 1774, i.e. at the time of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca that ended the Russian-Turkish War of 1768–74, the total number of Turks in the province was at least three times higher than the 500 people originally planned for by the Military Collegium.

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Approximate number of Turkish POWs
stationed in the territory of Belgorod Province
(as of July 10, 1774)\(^\text{10}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Number of POWs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgorod</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karpov (non-existent now, was in current lakovlevo raion of Belgorod oblast)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korocha</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kursk</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miropol’e (currently in Sumy oblast of Ukraine)</td>
<td>100 – 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboian’</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putivl’</td>
<td>140 – 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryl’sk</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staryi Oskol</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudzha</td>
<td>100 – 110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iablonovo (currently in Korocha raion of Belgorod oblast)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>1510 – 1540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the fact that the POWs were unaccustomed to the traditional food of a Russian soldier, they received monetary compensation rather than food at a rate of three kopecks a day, “so that they could buy themselves what they wished and could thus nourish themselves.” When the Turks were employed in public works, another kopeck was added to the daily sum. If the prisoners were hired to work for private individuals, their additional payments depended on the will of the employer. Thus, the author N. Kokhanovskaia (N. S. Sokhanskaia) recalled that her great-grandfather, who lived near Korocha, “hired captive Turks, who dug ponds in Khvoshechevatoe and an entire lake for the winery in Bekhteevka.” Kokhanovskaia also indicated that the Turks were fed at the expense of the employer and also received two kopecks per day for their work, while the price of a bag of rye flour was six kopecks (1886, 13).

Clothing allowance for the POWs included both summer and winter clothing. In particular, the latter consisted of a sheepskin coat, hat, shirt, warm trousers, boots, and homespun cloth for leggings. Due to a shortage of personnel, the escort of Turkish POWs to places of internment was carried out by armed townsfolk (primarily retired soldiers).

Besides the direct placement of prisoners on its territory, Belgorod province also functioned as a transit region through which the POWs were

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escorted to Voronezh province, mainly via “Belgorod—Valuiki” and “Sudzha—Oboian’—Staryi Oskol—Ostrogozhsk” routes.\(^{11}\) In such cases, the POW contingents were joined by specially appointed commissioners on the border of the province, whose task it was to make sure “that no commoner was offended while the parties passed by.” Local authorities and the local population were required to provide carts “for the exhausted and sick prisoners,” and, if necessary, to provide people to support the convoy “with possible shifts from the garrison.” In addition, instructions dictated the dispatch to the settlements along the escort routes of “as much food as possible for camp followers, or let the residents prepare white bread and other food that they could sell at a profitable price so that the prisoners were delivered from these needs.” At night, it called for the placement of the Turks in huts “and leave them locked there on their own, guarded by the commoners.”\(^{12}\)

The highly organized nature of work with POWs in the province is indicated by the fact that during the six years of war, despite the proximity of the border, only one successful (though collective) escape from its territory occurred, dated August 1770.\(^{13}\)

It should be noted that during their time in Belgorod, a number of Turkish prisoners converted to Orthodoxy and became Russian subjects. Thus, already on February 11, 1770, Bishop Samuil of Belgorod wrote to the Holy Synod that “Turk Mehemet Uzer oglu, who was sent with the first party of captives from Kiev, . . . is willing to accept the Greek Orthodox confession of faith through no coercion whatsoever.” Then the bishop asked the Synod for a “special decree” concerning what he should do in such cases, taking into account the fact that Turkey and Russia were at war.\(^{14}\) Almost simultaneously with the bishop’s letter, A. M. Fliverk raised the same matter with the Military Collegium. The result of their joint efforts was the decree of Catherine II on April 20, 1770, “On the pronouncement of captured Turks and Tatars who accept the Greek-Russian faith as free people and leaving them to choose their way of life.”\(^{15}\) This most important document determined the fate of naturalized Turkish POWs in Russia for nearly a century.

Further, according to our estimates, in 1771 the governor of Belgorod was the first to introduce the practice of “special placement” to ensure the safety of Turkish prisoners who were willing to convert to Orthodoxy.


Apparently it was due to this requirement that the janissary Ahmed, detained in Staryi Oskol, was baptized in 1774 a few dozen miles away in Manturovo (now the regional center of Kursk oblast).\(^\text{16}\) In the context of naturalization, Makhmet Bek (in Orthodoxy: Pavel Petrovich Bek) deserves special attention. He was baptized in Belgorod in late 1770 and then voluntarily enlisted as a private in the Akhtyrka hussar regiment.\(^\text{17}\)

As for the repatriation of the Turks from the province, it was uneventful and mostly completed by April 1775, i.e. before the end of the spring thaw. However, in November the Turkish government filed claims with Russia, alleging that thirty former Turkish prisoners of war were illegally being held in Belgorod, and even listed their names. The head of the Collegium of Foreign Affairs demanded that the governor “find out whether the aforementioned Turks are kept anywhere.” The audit showed that twenty-two people from the list had adopted the Orthodox faith and, according to the requirements of Article 25 of the Küçük Kaynarca Peace Treaty, were not subject to repatriation. In regard to an additional seven people, no information was found. There was only one person staying in town illegally, Belekli (Baloch) Ismail, who lived in Belgorod of his own will and apparently had already managed to start “his own business” there and thus did not hurry home.\(^\text{18}\)

Summarizing the above, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. During this period, the authorities of Belgorod Province successfully coped with the tasks concerning the reception, accommodation, and further evacuation of enemy prisoners of war. During the war, about 25 percent of all Ottoman prisoners were stationed in the province, and about the same amount passed through the territory to Voronezh Province.

2. The organization of work with captive contingents in Belgorod ensured acceptable conditions, even in the face of a small number of convoys and the acute shortage of accommodation. It also managed to avoid outbreaks of infectious diseases and minimize prisoner escapes.

3. The authorities of the Belgorod province made a significant contribution to the improvement of both the process and legislative framework for the naturalization of former Turkish prisoners in Russia.

Translated from Russian by Alexander M. Amatov


References


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‘GOOD’ BATTLES AND ‘BAD’ BATTLES: 
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WESTERN MEDIA COVERAGE 
OF THE BATTLES OF MOSUL AND ALEPPO

Gregory Simons

1) Uppsala University
2) Swedish Defence University

Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.

Napoleon Bonaparte

Abstract. The author examines the coverage of two simultaneously occurring battles, Mosul and Aleppo, in the Western media. Although both battles are intended to be key moments in defeating terrorist organisations, there is a stark contrast in the Western media’s framing of these events. In order to analyse the vast gaps in the coverage of these battles, the lens of news management, which is a means to influence public perception and opinion, is employed to view these two distinct events in Iraq and Syria. The author concludes that news management is applied to the information flows in these events in order to shape public opinion and perception of the battles Mosul and Aleppo—one ‘good’ and the other ‘bad.’

Keywords: media, news management, battle of Mosul, battle of Aleppo.

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знаковые события в борьбе с террористическими организациями, наблюдается значительный контраст в их подаче западными СМИ. Исследование специфики принципиальных различий в освещении данных сражений в Ираке и Сирии проводится с точки зрения применения технологий менеджмента новостей, который предполагает использование инструментов воздействия на общественное восприятие и мнение. Автор приходит к выводу о том, что менеджмент новостей применяется для регулирования новостного потока о данных событиях для того, чтобы формировать общественное восприятие и мнение об одном из них как о «хорошем», а о другом – как о «плохом».

Ключевые слова: средства массовой информации, менеджмент новостей, сражение за Мосул, сражение за Алеппо.

Introduction

Media content related to the topic of war is political in nature and in its ability to influence political outcomes. Therefore, modern armed conflicts and mass media become intertwined. “Indeed, the nature of contemporary conflict, coupled with the character of contemporary communications, means that the image […] has become the key weapon in modern war” (Michalski & Gow 2007, 222). As noted historically by the likes of Sun Tzu and von Clausewitz, war is politics by another means. It affects the tangible (physical) and intangible (psychological) elements of war (Simons 2012).

Wars have been portrayed and projected as being good or bad at certain points in time, and this may even change in terms of the ethical judgement as space and time progresses. Information spaces help to shape the perception and the opinion of an audience, but this is contingent upon a number of different factors that are present in the human and informational environment.

This paper works from the premise that media is an instrument of war, which was asserted by Kenneth Payne. Such an assertion runs counter to the popular mantra that media is a fourth estate. The political connection to war makes public perception and opinion either a useful ally or a problematic complication. As media are the supposed eyes and ears of the public to remote events, it is the ideal environment to manipulate information flows in order to shape a political agenda (Simons 2016). Two simultaneously occurring battles, Aleppo and Mosul, and their coverage in the Western media are examined and analysed.

The lens to view these two distinct events in Iraq and Syria shall be news management, which is a means to influence public perception and opinion. This will be done with the question in mind, why are there such vast gaps in the framing of these two events when both of the battles are intended to be key moments in defeating terrorist organisations? Each of
the battles shall be taken in turn after the basic theoretical arguments and foundations of this paper have been established.

**Media, War and Politics**

Media have a complicated history and relationship with war. Three key narratives of the role of mainstream media in communicating conflict have been identified: “as critical observer, publicist, and most recently, as battleground, the surface upon which war is imagined and executed” (Thussu & Freedman 2003, 4). Their fourth estate function should compel them to be critical of the government message and to serve public interest, yet pressures, such as the demand for public unity and patriotism, reduce such opportunities during periods of armed conflict. BBC producer Kenneth Payne outlines the function of the media succinctly: “The media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield (Payne 2005, 81).”

The above mentioned situation creates a problem for society as media and journalists create a situation in which little or no debate exists and in which professional ethics of the profession are readily abandoned as part of the wider war effort. This situation has been observed by others: “In a period where diversity of opinion was possible, the newspapers’ editorials mirrored the official policy, even when this was undermined. A pattern that has expanded as the conflicts escalated” (Willcox 2005, 90). To argue for absolute objectivity is a utopian dream, but there does need to be a greater debate and level of awareness of the pros and cons of a situation, especially when moving towards military conflict:

Rather than playing a critical role in questioning American engagement in foreign wars, the mass media has traditionally promoted an image of the U.S. as committed to promoting democracy and human rights. While the promotion of pro-war views is not a problem in-and-of-itself, the systematic denial of alternative interpretations for American motives does constitute a serious impediment to efforts in achieving more balanced reporting and informed public debate (DiMaggio 2009, 77).

A number of trends have been observed above in how media set about reporting on armed conflict, which confirms Payne’s assertion that media are an instrument of war. Carruthers notes the “news organisations’ tendency to allow political elites to set the agenda; the potency of patriotism to muffle dissent and curb debate; the willingness of media to discipline one another; and professional norms of objectivity and balance that appear to institutionalise, rather than eliminate, certain forms of bias”
(Carruthers 2011, 43). Other trends have been noted too. The greater mediatisations of conflict has brought about a number of dynamics, namely: amplification, framing and performative agency, and co-structuring (Hjarvard et al. 2015, 4). These have led to an evolution in armed conflicts and the following aspects were noted and categorised as being influential on public perception and reception. Conduits refers to how “media may expand and amplify conflicts across time and space, that is, increase the speed, geographical reach, and level of involvement in armed conflicts.” In terms of languages, “media may be used to frame conflicts, allowing diverse social actors to perform in particular ways and resulting in a particular dramaturgy of the conflict in question.” Environment is also a factor: “media are an integral to various social institutions and at the same time constitute a public sphere” (Ibid., 9). Therefore, the means of sending a message, the nature of the message’s content, and the wider social and political environment in which the acts of communication take place all contribute to the relative success of the act (in which success is measured in terms of influence over the opinions and actions of a target audience in the desired manner of the message communicator). It is a difficult balance that is dependent upon timing and circumstance occurring within the environment of the intended target audience. Sometimes this is conducted under the conditions of deception and falsehood. The ability to successfully wage war is based upon the ability to control the information environment, and consequently the information, perceptions, and opinions of the public to create a façade of ethical and political legitimacy:

A veritable vacuum of responsibility arises from the hierarchical structure of the military: fallible leaders wage wars based upon false premises (above all, that there is no alternative), and the people support and soldiers execute military missions on the basis of omissive descriptions of what war entails (Calhoun 2013, 165).

This creates what some refer to as the fog of war: “Today, however, the battlefield is superimposed upon civilian societies, generating a thick fog in which the guilty and the innocent, combatants and non-combatants are jumbled together chaotically” (Calhoun 2013, 165). Complexity goes against the human desire to break situations down into “understandable” news bites, which simplifies complex situations, often in an intentionally subjective manner that can benefit the political agenda of an actor.

In an effort to make a complex event more “understandable,” the role of the conduit and language are of critical importance in conveying an intended (as opposed to a random or unintended) meaning that shapes perception and opinion in the target audience. The combined effect of image and text in media content on the media consumer are important,
but require something more in order to generate the desired meaning: “It is the narrative underpinning a news outlet’s understanding of a specific situation that ultimately matters, independent of the language that is used to produce that narration, be it verbal or visual” (De Franco 2012, 170). Given the current 24/7 news cycle, an actor must continually engage in the public information sphere to stand a chance of retaining any possible political advantage.

In order to maintain the initiative and retain the narrative and therefore the ability to influence public opinion and perception, those seeking a certain policy line need to be proactive in shaping information and content in the public information space. If they do not, any advantage can be potentially lost:

More importantly, the mere fact that this may happen pushes politicians to produce as much information as they can with a two-fold objective: 1) to saturate the media and lead journalists to use news which is already available instead of searching for that which is not; and 2) to keep the public quiet with an illusion of transparency (De Franco 2012, 174).

There are long tested means and methods of achieving this state in the public information sphere. News Management is defined as being “the strategic communication of messages, via the media, in order to further political goals. It is concerned with the control of information, and the way in which political information is reported, by political organisations” (Lilleker 2011, 131). A political actor can seek an advantage through managing information and disclosure through news. The end of the manipulation of the news is linked to a “game” of persuasion, which can provide a competitive edge over rival interests (Shin 1994). As noted in a historical context, such practices can present certain challenges and issues. A situation can arise when “the media become a docile conduit for the flow of supposedly neutral information to the public, thereby serving the national interest” (Tulloch 1993, 382). Some researchers have established a link between news management and the practice of foreign policy, in particular strategic public diplomacy: “As the campaigns to mobilize support for both US-led wars [the 1991 Gulf War and 2003 Iraq War] made clear, strategic public diplomacy is most effective in settings in which the level of information held by the public is low and in which the operations of strategic communication can be kept out of the public eye” (Esser 2009, 731). In addition to laying the groundwork and conditions for establishing a “good” or popular war, these very methods could also be used to create the requisite intangible conditions for a “bad” or unpopular war through a similar campaign, but with the use of negative messaging. A
true test of skill and excellence in news management would be to run two campaigns simultaneously—one positive and one negative—to characterise two different battles being waged at the same time in which one is ‘good’ and the other is ‘bad.’

**News Management in War**

Two different battles were chosen to test the above idea, whether it is possible to engage effectively in news management of two simultaneous battles in the same geographical region. Limiting it to ongoing conflicts and the need to find one “good” and one “bad” battle greatly reduced the number of potential choices. Given the highly political nature of war, the “best” and most likely location to find this situation was in the Middle East. The current level of geopolitical competition and conflict in the region (Saudi Arabia versus Iran, Turkey versus Kurds, US versus Russia) meant that there are many ongoing conflicts, but there are few places where there are key or iconic battles being fought simultaneously. This excluded many of the conflicts, such as Yemen and Afghanistan. Both of these battles needed a high profile in terms of news coverage in Western media.

However, there are two battles that have begun and are being narrated as key moments, the success of which could have a decisive effect on the outcome of the war. One of these is the Battle of Mosul in Iraq in 2016, which has been ongoing for some time. The capture of this town is being trumpeted as a path to success against the Islamic State. This has been framed as the “good” war, one in which human values predominate. The other battle is the Battle for Aleppo in Syria in 2016, which is framed as a “bad” war, one in which the oppression of human values predominates. Both of the battles are being framed as against terrorist forces (Al Qaeda in Aleppo and ISIS in Mosul) by those conducting the military operations. Yet the framing in Western media differs greatly in its ethical judgement of the two events, even though both of these groups are considered terrorist organisations in the West.

Material for the two events was drawn from news articles received from headlines emailed to the author, such as *Space War* (a news aggregate), *New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post*, and from the news feed on Facebook. In addition, the author conducted basic internet searches for the terms “Russian attack on Aleppo 2016” and “Attack on Mosul 2016” using the search engine Google. The results were manually checked to make sure they met the criteria (Western media news outlets, relevance to the individual events). The first ten pages of results for each search were examined and analysed. More than 200 news stories were read and analysed in the course of the research. The following represents a representative sample of the common sets of descriptions and narratives of the two battles in question.
Aleppo—the ‘Bad’ Battle

From the very start of the conflict in Syria, the US-led West has consistently demanded and worked towards regime change in Syria (Simons 2016). This same message continues until now. For example, Hillary Clinton stated that “removing President Bashar al-Assad is the top priority in Syria.”\(^1\) The war in Syria came to Aleppo in July 2012. Given the location of the city near the Turkish border on the main land transport route, it is a strategic point. In June 2016 Hassan Nasrallah (Hezbollah chief) declared that Syria’s “real, strategic, greatest battle is in Aleppo and the surrounding area.” In addition, the significance of the battle is also stressed by the author of the article: “The stage is prepared for the Syrian endgame—a game the rebels look doomed to lose, along with the entire anti-Assad revolution.”\(^2\) This event is projected by the different sides of this conflict as a key and decisive event that shall shape the future of the entire conflict for the worse should the Syrian government and Russian military forces prevail.

There are black and white characterisations of the different sides in the conflict, the “good rebel” underdogs and the “bad” and oppressive Syrian government and Russian forces. Now it is necessary to offer a brief and concrete example to illustrate the characterisation of the main actors of the conflict in an ethical frame. The movement of Syrian or Russian military hardware is projected as sinister and “ominous” with harmful and malicious intent.\(^3\) As the villains, the Syrian government and Russians are suitably cast as ruthless and without mercy or compassion:

Many of the 300,000 plus unfortunates trapped inside face the prospect of slowly starving as extortionately-priced food, medicine and fuel supplies are systematically blocked. Some will die before then from Syrian and Russian government barrel-bombing. Latterly supplemented by incendiary cluster munitions burning to 2500 °C, the bombers are steadily eradicating schools, hospitals and markets from above with impunity.\(^4\)


A lot of assertions and statements are made without any necessary support or actual evidence provided by the journalist. The intention, or at least the effect, is to paint as negative a picture as possible of the Syrian government and their allies in spite of the struggle against terrorist groups, such as Al Nusra (now rebranded as Jabhat Fateh Al-Sham), an Al Qaeda affiliate operating in the city and which Western media paint in a positive light: “Syria’s moderate opposition groups have suffered years of broken promises of support from the international community.”

Another important point is the use of deceptive labelling, such as “moderate forces” or “rebels.” This is a vague, yet reasonably positive term, which has included such forces as Al Nusra in the past. These groups are pictured as being a heroic underdog that needs and deserves support to bring about regime change.

From these brief initial observations, it is possible to note clusters of frames, events and processes through which news stories further propagate a moral and ethical projection of the war, which has a tendency to favour the “rebels” and the policy goal of regime change in Syria. Military action conducted by the Syrian government and its allies is one of the themes, and the “diplomatic” actions of the United States and its allies are another central theme. The primary messages in the Western media narrative of the Battle for Aleppo are of indiscriminate bombings by the Syrian government and Russia, a long suffering civilian population, and heroic “rebel” resistance.

Many of these news stories are based upon the testimony of unnamed Syrian “activists,” without divulging the name of the person or group or declaring their goals or aims. This seems to be a deliberate strategy of hiding the true nature of those people and groups, whilst giving the superficial impression of their “objectivity.” One such article, which appeared in the Los Angeles Times, provides numerous examples of inconsistent logic as the result of news management of two simultaneous battles in which one is declared good and the other bad: “At the start of that meeting the UN’s top envoy to Syria accused the government of unleashing unprecedented military violence against civilians in Aleppo.” The term unprecedented remains unqualified and is an unsubstantiated assertion, but it sounds menacing. Quotes from political figures are not challenged or questioned, but simply reported as being ‘facts’, even though opposing views are usually critically challenged in mainstream mass media reporting. The offensive is painted as one that is doomed to fail as there is no solely “military solution” possible. Western hype is increased through accusations of Syrian and Russian war crimes and the possibility of bringing individuals in both countries to trial: “France’s Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said Russia and Iran will be guilty of war crimes if they

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don’t pressure Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to stop escalating violence.” There were even demands made for “mercy” to be shown to the so-called rebels: “The statement released by 33 factions called upon the government and Russian forces to halt airstrikes and lift sieges on opposition areas.”6 The thirty-three factions remain unnamed, along with their political and military agenda. The demands are directed at so-called opposition areas and not at areas under siege by jihadist forces. The sources in this article were only those who opposed the Syrian government and the Russian military involvement.

The picture of the Syrian conflict is far from consistent, especially in terms of the quality of journalism. An impression that can be deduced by the reporting is of great suffering, although most of the references relate to events in the eastern part of the city that is held by Jihadist forces, and not the government-held western parts of the city. In one of the rare articles that told the other side of the story in Western mainstream media, this omission becomes clear. A thirty-year-old student from Western Aleppo was interviewed (the identity, age and profession are given): “The policy of these Western countries is to destroy the Syrian government, or the ‘regime’ as they call it, so they don’t mention what happens in government territory ... because they don’t want their people to know the truth of what is happening in the country.” He notes further: “Western channels don’t send their correspondents to government-controlled areas because that would be an acknowledgement of the Syrian state.” As noted in this article, although the government controls the skies, the jihadist forces regularly fire mortars into civilian areas of western Aleppo.7 Another article appeared in the New York Times. Although the article tried to paint a more normal and better life for people in the government-controlled Western Aleppo, it could not completely ignore the human suffering there either. The report even gave the official figure of 11,000 civilian deaths in Western Aleppo as the result of indiscriminate shelling by anti-Assad forces that included a mixture of Al Qaeda and US-backed groups.8 These particular news articles hint at the perception of an existing media dichotomy between those whose misery is worthy of publicising and others who are unworthy, which hints at the possibility of a political agenda in which media are being used according to Payne as an instrument of war.


From news article headlines, it is clear that an offensive began by the Syrian government to take Aleppo back from the jihadist forces. Some of the headlines can be somewhat neutral in their tone, such as “Syrian Government Troops Launch Ground Assault to Retake Aleppo” and “Moscow Sends More Warplanes into Syria as Aleppo Fighting Rages.” Other news headlines do little to mask their political partisanship through value and ethically laden suggestive rhetoric: “Russia’s Brutal Bombing of Aleppo May Be Calculated, and it May Be Working.” This article notes that “the effects of Russia’s bombing campaign in the Syrian city of Aleppo—destroying hospitals and schools, choking off basic supplies, and killing aid workers and hundreds of civilians over just days—raise a question: what could possibly motivate such brutality?” The type of rhetoric is heavily laden in pathos and reliant on assertion rather than evidence, or based on sources that have a distinct bias and political interest in the conflict, such as the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Other emotionally laden headlines include, “As Aleppo Burns, Assad’s Henchmen Live a Life of Luxury in the West: Godfathers of the Syrian Regime Flit Between Paris, Marbella and Mayfair as Their Country is Locked in a Bloody Civil War”, “In Push on Aleppo, Syria and Russia Seem Ready to Further Scorch its Earth”, “His Grip Still Secure, Bashar al-Assad Smiles as Syria Burns”, “Worse Than Hell: Russia, Syrian Regime Stepping up


Aleppo Fight.”14 “Russia Accused of Supporting ‘Barbarism’ Over Syrian Conflict,”15 and “Aleppo Battered as Russia Slams ‘Unacceptable’ Rhetoric.”16 There is also little balance in the content of these articles, which give only one subjective side of the story without any context and with various assertions and accusations to back the emotional rhetoric. Russia and the Syrian government are clearly projected as the villains of this story. There is also an attempt to project the “rebels” as fighting for freedom and the US-led West as objective brokers for the sake of humanity.

An iconic moment that was created to perpetuate these images and projected reality can be found in the reporting and rhetoric around ceasefires. The end of the ceasefire in October 2016 created an atmosphere of value-based lobbying through media reporting on the issue. Russia and Syria were already projected as being inhumane aggressors and the reporting reflected this narrative. One such blatant example appeared in the Daily Mail: “As a Gesture of Goodwill We Won’t Bomb You (Today): Russia and Syria Announce Temporary Ceasefire Over Aleppo ‘That will Last Eight Hours,’” which occurred after heavy criticism by Western media that the Syrian government never allowed ceasefires.17 The ceasefire was also projected as being a lost opportunity, such as the evacuation of civilians from eastern Aleppo held by the jihadist forces.18 Many media articles placed the blame for the failure of the ceasefire solely on Russia and Syria, with at least one notable exception: “The Syrian military called off a ceasefire agreement that began last week, a decision it blamed on rebel groups, but was likely affected by a US bombing mission that killed


Syrian government forces over the weekend.\textsuperscript{19} The author makes clear reference to the US airstrike that was responsible for the deaths of numerous Syrian soldiers and that enabled ISIS to capture a Syrian military base that was bombed during the ceasefire.

Western media reporting takes significant time and effort to project the West as a humanitarian force in the conflict. Various media reports make mention of the concern expressed by Western political leaders, and Russian aggression in the face of Western humanism.\textsuperscript{20} However, some contradictions in the narrative exist. Whilst the West projects itself as the saviour and Russia and Syria as the villains, this façade gets challenged in some of the solutions to the violence that are offered to the public. This ranges from threats by the US government to unilaterally stop diplomatic efforts with Russia, to talk of direct and overt military intervention in Syria against Russia and the Syrian government to stop the killing.\textsuperscript{21} There seems to be little consideration given in these political statements to the effects on the ground of foreign political and military interference on the civilians living within the government-controlled areas.


Some signs of critical reflection periodically surface in Western media reporting concerning aspects of the Syrian conflict. One of the articles noted was from the *Los Angeles Times* and dealt with the challenges and the dilemmas the US faced in getting involved in the Syrian war in a more open and direct form, including how to deal with the growth of the jihadist group Fateh al-Sham: “In recent weeks, US intelligence has detected signs that al Qaeda operatives in Syria are plotting attacks against the West, raising concerns that the hard-line Islamist group has escaped scrutiny for too long, according to two US intelligence officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information”\(^{22}\). This fits with the US’s short-term vision for Syria that seemingly is focused narrowly on regime change. This point has been noted by others: “Yet the horrific tragedy now unfolding in Syria is partially the result of the West’s tacit and overt support for the overthrow of Syria’s secular government by radical Sunni fundamentalists. This has been, in effect, US policy in Syria, and it runs directly counter to US national-security interests.”\(^{23}\)

**Mosul—the ‘Good’ Battle**

In June 2014, ISIS captured the Iraqi city of Mosul and soon afterwards declared a caliphate\(^{24}\). A number of military offensives have been attempted by Iraqi and Kurdish forces in 2015 and 2016. The most recent began on October 16, 2016, with the operational name “We Are Coming, Nineveh” (named after the governorate that surrounds Mosul)\(^{25}\). Coalition forces opposing ISIS maintain a 10:1 numerical advantage.\(^{26}\) The

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Battle for Mosul is projected as a key event that can turn the tide against ISIS and its caliphate. Mosul is often described as the jewel in the Islamic State’s crown. US air support in this battle is characterised in very different terms to Russian air support in Aleppo: “They’re like a skilful surgeon removing a cancer.” First and foremost, this is characterised and narrated by politicians, military officials, and the mass media as a battle for the liberation of the local population. It is done rhetorically with a certain sense of inevitability in the eventual outcome: “After losing several key cities in Iraq and also in Syria, the jihadists’ ‘state’ is already looking threadbare and the loss of Mosul would all but seal its disintegration.”

The general tone of Western media about this military offensive is that it is a good battle, which is expressed in a number of emphasized aspects, such as the local population, the nature and weakness of ISIS, and the strength and skill of allied forces with their “humanitarian” approach.

One of the lines of reporting in the Battle for Mosul is that this is done for the good of the local population in order to liberate them from an oppressive occupier. At times this is done with a tinge of caution: “The reality is more complex than many assume. Without a peace plan and counter-narrative that involves all the peoples of Iraq, victory will be partial and short-lived.” One of the images painted is that of a military offensive that is taking all steps possible to minimise civilian casualties, for example, stories of the evacuation of civilians from villages in the path of the offensive. There is a picture of life returning to a sense of normality and a sense of relief by residents freed from ISIS rule. The humanity of the coalition forces is contrasted with the inhumanity of ISIS.


28 Ibid.


One of the humanitarian dilemmas was raised in the *Los Angeles Times*. This concerns the question of how to win the Battle of Mosul and to free more than one million trapped residents without killing them.\(^{33}\) This apparently humane approach to fighting the battle is contrasted against a ruthless and merciless enemy. The Pentagon stated that “Islamic State jihadists are trapping Mosul’s residents to use as human shields. [...] IS had for weeks kept Mosul’s estimated population of 1.5 million from escaping, with the start of the offensive offering them no respite.”\(^{34}\) However, this contrasted significantly from news that was published just days earlier. Coalition forces had dropped four-page leaflets over Mosul and the ISIS-occupied territories warning of an impending military offensive to liberate them: “Residents are asked to stay away from certain parts of the city, avoid ISIS positions, remain in their homes and seal their windows and doors.”\(^{35}\) Thus it seems that the Pentagon statement that residents were being forced to stay as human shields as residents had in fact been advised to stay in their homes by the coalition forces arrayed against ISIS in the Mosul area. With such discrepancies in the message, such contradictions can erode the sense of public trust in the messenger. Not everyone was convinced that the best interests of Iraqi civilians were being considered: “Usually in war, the real losers are the civilians. While the Battle for Mosul has begun, the fight for normality is not on the horizon. In these types of operations, enemy targets are always drawn up, but we hear less and less about the civilians that need saving.”\(^{36}\) The enemy, ISIS, is depicted in a symbolic and simplistic manner as evil villains and at times as cowards.


ISIS fighters are shown as oppressive and ruthless terrorists and the “bad guy” in the Western mass media. This image is reinforced with stories of atrocities against civilians and the use of suicide attacks to ensure the message of a highly motivated fanatical and ideological opponent is communicated effectively.\textsuperscript{37} In spite of this emphasized trait of ruthlessness and fanaticism, they are also labelled as cowards in their defence of Mosul. News headlines directly point to the cowardice displayed by ISIS and especially its leaders. A selection of those headlines illustrates this point: “Islamic State Leaders are Fleeing Mosul, Says US General.”\textsuperscript{38} “ISIS Leaders Abandon Mosul as Iraqi Military Presses Attack,”\textsuperscript{39} and “This War is a drag! Cowardly ISIS Fighters Flee Mosul Dressed in Women’s Clothes After Leader Orders Wives and Girlfriends to Evacuate the City.”\textsuperscript{40} These headlines seemingly contradict the narrative of the battle-hardened and fanatical enemy. One headline even promised a bigger prize in Mosul: “ISIS Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi ‘Hiding in Mosul’ as Iraqi Forces Reach City.”\textsuperscript{41} Cowardice and hiding by ISIS fighters are highlighted in these particular types of news stories.

In terms of how the Western mainstream media characterise the intentions and effects of the coalition’s military actions against ISIS in Mosul, it is a vastly different message to that used to describe the military offensive in Aleppo. The assessment is upbeat and positive in its communicated mood. It reports positive milestones, such as “Reaching Mosul Caps a Turnaround for Iraq Forces.”\textsuperscript{42} In other words, the Iraqi


forces have shaken off the ghosts of the past and are becoming an effective fighting force. This message is reinforced by stories that emphasize military gains, such as “Iraqi PM: Operation to drive ISIS out of Mosul is Imminent.” These headlines are intended to assure the war-weary Western public of an Iraqi military taking over the fight and its attendant risks, freeing Western soldiers from the dangers involved. They manage the expectations of the Western publics concerning the conflict. Another example of expectation management is found in trying to push the idea of victory, but with a caveat: “Iraqi Forces Fear Tough Battles Ahead After Quick Gains.”

The supporting role of the United States in training Iraqi forces and in preparing for the Mosul offensive is mentioned. Successes of the offensive are trumpeted: “In Wake of Mosul Offensive, a Tale of Two Villages.” It is a story of hardship and triumph, from oppression to freedom, by the local people and the military coalition against ISIS. The slow and steady military progress against ISIS is also emphasized: “Coalition Huddles as Forces Inch Towards Mosul.” This story is intended to emphasize unity and resolve in the fight. When the coalition forces engage in military operations they are characterised as “moving;” these


forces “push toward” an objective or “launch an offensive.” The rhetoric and deliberate wording of these military actions is either neutral or put in a positive context and light. The main point is that this is a good battle concerning the liberation and salvation of the local people.

The outcome of the Battle of Mosul is critically reflected upon by a minority of journalists in the sample of news stories that were read and analysed. Robert Fisk asks if Mosul falls, will ISIS flee to the relative safety of Syria and if so, what then? He concludes: “the entire ISIS caliphate army could be directed against the Assad government and its allies—a scenario which might cause some satisfaction in Washington.” This possible scenario gives a good overview of the short-term geopolitical considerations and tactics in the Middle East. The issue of geopolitical influence in the wake of the liberation of Mosul has appeared in other articles:

The offensive to liberate Mosul, which began in the early hours of October 17, is far more delicate and challenging than that of any previous Islamic State-held cities because of its size and because Nineveh province—of which Mosul is the capital—consists of the most diverse and ancient ethnic and religious communities in Iraq. Moreover, a dug-in Islamic State looks set to fight to the death there unlike in Fallujah where over 1000 fighters and members retreated from the town. Making it even more contentious, the geopolitical significance of Mosul has created competition between the federal government, pro-Iranian Shia militias, the Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraqi Arab Sunni factions, and regional powers to carve out future influence in the city.


Thus the challenge of the Battle for Mosul is not the actual physical fighting that has begun to determine who occupies the territory, but the long-term political challenges and threats that shall emerge after this particular phase has finished. The current public relations campaign that is being waged in front of and with the mass media, especially given the disparity of military strength, is likely to be decided soon. The political and geopolitical challenges that emerge after this fight will likely ensure continued instability for some time to come. This task of recovery is made even more difficult owing to weak Iraqi state institutions. In this regard, the media narrative is a possible tool to realise these geopolitical goals by shaping public perception and opinion of these events.

**Analysis—Why Good and Bad?**

Although there is a clear and gaping discrepancy in Western media reporting on the Battles of Aleppo and Mosul, in which Aleppo is the bad and Mosul is the good battle, it has not gone unnoticed by astute observers. There are many similarities between the two battles: both concern the taking back of territory from antigovernment terrorist forces, both are key battles that may have a significant impact on the future course of the war against terrorist forces, and both involve a military siege of an area with a significant civilian population. The Russian or Syrian government’s message is seldom seen in mainstream media content, and even more rarely without some form of added interpretation. It does on rare occasion occur, as for example, “Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says Western outrage over a Russian bombing campaign in the Syrian city of Aleppo is hypocritical because Western governments are carrying out a similar operation in the Iraqi city of Mosul.” The Coalition Forces in Iraq, on the other hand, are often quoted verbatim without being challenged or interpreted for the reader.

Russian and Syrian government air strikes have been focused on as cruel and deliberate acts of barbarity and a form of collective punishment against the civilian population in spite of indications that Jabhat Fateh al-Sham are preventing civilians from leaving and using them as human shields. This is the narrative used to describe what is happening in


http://time.com/isis-mosul/


Mosul, creating different interpretations of the same act in order to support the idea of good and bad actors in the two battles. Civilian deaths as the result of coalition and especially US-led air strikes have been played down to an extent. For example, the US government put the civilian death toll as the result of air strikes in Iraq and Syria at 42, while the London-based group Airwars counted at least 1323 civilians killed and significant destruction.\(^{58}\) Amnesty International has been extremely critical of coalition air strikes, including in Syria, arguing that the US needs to be more open and honest about the civilian death toll.\(^{59}\) Accusations have also been levelled that the Pentagon goes as far as to ignore civilian casualties that result from air strikes directed against ISIS.\(^{60}\) Amnesty International produced a twenty-six-page memorandum that details the deaths and destruction of civilian infrastructure in minute detail (Amnesty International 2016). This is far from the praise that US air strikes were surgically precise and effective that appeared in some mainstream media news reports.

A number of Western media stories have been debunked, which has revealed the methods used to plant information through news to manipulate public opinion. Scholars have demonstrated the role and value of penetrating news with emotional propaganda in order to sway public opinion towards a desired policy direction (Calhoun 2013; Carruthers 2011; De Franco 2012; DiMaggio 2009; Eskjaer et al. 2015; Simons 2016; Willcox 2005). One article noted that there are two enemies of governments at war: “British wars abroad have two enemies. First, the official enemy portrayed as a monster whom we always battle with noble intentions. But second is the enemy within—us, the public. The danger posed by the public is that we may stop the elites doing what they want, hence we are subject to state ‘information operations’ to convey messages and obscure facts, usually via compliant media organisations.”\(^{61}\) One of these fed stories has been the alleged bombing of hospitals by Russia in Eastern Aleppo. This was given as a fact by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, but not one that could be confirmed by a briefing at the State


Department in response to questions by journalist Matt Lee. The bombings were also refuted by a group of Syrian doctors in Aleppo. This is more than a naturally occurring fog of war, but rather a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape public perception and opinion through news management.

The situation implies that there is an attempt at propaganda to rally public opinion around the military operation, in which media are being used as an instrument of war to affect the opinion and perception of these two events that impact upon the political and military considerations in each of the conflicts as laid out by Payne (2005). This is due to the nature of the tangible and intangible (such as the desire and will to fight, the level of trust in the political and military leadership) elements of war (see Simons 2012) that can restrict an opponent whilst freeing one’s own hands if a war is successfully communicated as being just as opposed to unjust. This is what John Pilger describes as “invisible government” through the use of propaganda:

Imagine two cities. Both are under siege by the forces of the government of that country. Both cities are occupied by fanatics, who commit terrible atrocities, such as beheading people. But there is a vital difference. In one siege, the government soldiers are described as liberators by Western reporters embedded with them, who enthusiastically report their battles and air strikes. There are front pages of these heroic soldiers giving a V-sign for victory. There is scant mention of civilian casualties. In the second city—in another country nearby—almost exactly the same is happening. Government forces are laying siege to a city controlled by the same breed of fanatics. The difference is that these fanatics are supported, supplied and armed by “us”—by the United States and Britain. They even have a media centre that is funded by Britain and America. Another difference is that the government soldiers laying siege to this city are bad guys, condemned for assaulting and bombing...
the city—which is exactly what the good soldiers do in the first city.⁶⁴

Others have also noted the increasing gap between what is reported in the corporate media and reality. A somewhat Orwellian twist has been noted in Western media reporting: “The corporate media’s ‘coverage’ of Syria adds a twist to Orwell’s dictum—inconvenient reports and facts do occasionally appear in respected newspapers and on popular news programmes but they are invariably ignored, decontextualized or not followed up on.”⁶⁵ This does account for some limited diversity that appears in Western mainstream news reporting on these two events, and the fact that these rare reports remain somewhat isolated cases that are not followed up on. There have been some articles that have noted the similarities between the two offensives. One of these appears in the Los Angeles Times, “Russia Portrays its Aleppo Bombing as a Mosul-Style Offensive,”⁶⁶ in which much more time is given to uncritical coverage of the response by US officials than to refuting the claim found in headline. Therefore, with an appearance of offering opposing views, it gives a subjective preference to one interpretation. Patrick Cockburn has noted the evident propaganda in the news of the two battles. He points to the mistakes of the past, such as in the lead-up to the Iraq War in 2003, that continue to be repeated in the present. He reflects on the lessons: “It is a salutary story because later in the same year in Libya and Syria opposition activists were able to gain control of the media narrative and exclude all other interpretations of what was happening.”⁶⁷ The end result is to try and create a reality in which the reader is led to understand that good deaths occur in Mosul whereas bad deaths happen in Aleppo.⁶⁸ This is, in


effect, political lobbying with emotionally laden and politically subjective information to give one side an advantage in the waging of war.

**Conclusions**

According to the research presented in this particular article, mass media has acted as an instrument of war as described by Payne (2005), which is driven by the highly politicised nature of this conflict. It is intended to alter and affect the balance of the intangible elements of war, which in turn affects the tangible elements in terms of selection and application of military operational choices available. It can be used to both constrict one actor’s ability to act and engage, whilst simultaneously freeing another actor. War, after all, can be considered as politics by other means, and this requires carrying public opinion through managing popular perceptions.

This situation has driven a greater mediatisation of war (Hjarvard et al. 2015) as a means of communicating one’s cause and influencing the public (Calhoun 2013; Willcox 2005). This creates a situation in which the battlefield moves into mass media content in an informational sense (Thussu & Freedman 2003). News moves from an informing function to a propaganda function by priming and mobilising media audiences (DiMaggio 2009). What has been witnessed in the media content of mainstream Western news does fulfil the definition of news management: “The strategic communication of messages, via the media, in order to further political goals” (Lilleker 2011, 131). This is a game against geopolitical rivals with the goal of persuasion in order to gain a competitive political advantage over the rival’s interests.

There is a distinct flavour of scripting and narrating characters into the story by assigning them roles to simplify a complex situation and make it more understandable to the audience in a manner that suits the political goals and objectives of the messenger. In the case of Aleppo, the Syrian government and its allies have been assigned the bad guy role. They do what villains do, and the Russian government plays the role of a spoiler supervillain who seeks to uphold the oppressively unjust and unfair system of the bad guy. The good guy role goes to the groups of jihadists and anti-Assad forces, who are the good and pure underdogs seeking a fair and just social and political system. There are also victims, namely the local population, although in this particular case, it refers specifically to those in the jihadist-controlled Eastern Aleppo. Last and not least in this particular story is the saviour, the United States and its various allies, which are supporting the good guys of the story in the best interests of the good guys and the victims.

When applied to the situation in Mosul, the characters change somewhat and new ones appear in spite of the similarities concerning the two battles. The good guys are now the Coalition Forces that are aligned against the ISIS forces. Theirs is a story of liberation and freedom and
selfless sacrifice done in the name of the victims, the local civilian population. The bad guy role goes to the Islamic State and its destructive and oppressive presence in the area, whose fighters are depicted as hardened and callous oppressors, but also as cowards when confronted. Once more, the saviour role is awarded to the United States and its international allies, who are there to support the good guys to see that they prevail against the bad guys.

The news management process witnesses some news as promoted to support these defined character roles in this geopolitical game. Other news that is harmful or contradicts this story is squeezed out or marginalised in order to achieve information dominance in the global information space. The likely intended outcome is to support regime change in Syria and to reestablish political and military influence in Iraq. It is a process that requires some measure of political legitimacy and support, which is garnered by managing the information flows in these events in order to shape public opinion and perception of the two battles, one “good” and the other “bad.”

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Preservation of Icon-Painting Heritage in Russia
(based on Yaroslavl Regional Materials)

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Abstract. The interaction of government bodies and the Russian Orthodox Church on the question of returning some buildings and other property to the Church became part of state cultural policy in the post-Soviet period. This article investigates the process of returning religious artifacts to the Yaroslavl eparchy in the 1990s–2000s. During this period one of the biggest problems connected with the transfer of property to the Church was the ambivalent stance of regional state officials, which provoked conflict between museums and the Church over the ownership of icons. In Yaroslavl region, only toward the end of the 2000s did a relatively quiet and peaceful relationship between representatives of the Yaroslavl eparchy and regional museums begin. Mutual recognition of the necessity for a competent approach to preservation remains an ongoing process.

Keywords: icons, objects of cultural heritage, regional policy, museums, Yaroslavl region, Russian Orthodox Church, state.

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УДК 93/94

Сохранение иконописного наследия в России
(на материалах Ярославской области)

Аннотация. Одним из направлений культурной политики государства в постсоветский период становится взаимодействие государственных органов и представителей РПЦ по вопросу возвращения церкви зданий и иного культового имущества. В статье исследуются особенности процесса возвращения культовых художественных памятников Ярославской епархии в 1990–2000-е гг.

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Одной из ключевых проблем в процессе передачи церкви некогда принадлежавших ей святынь становится неоднозначность позиции региональных властей в отношении памятников иконописи, которая провоцирует конфликт музея и церкви за право обладания произведением. В Ярославской области лишь ближе к концу 2000-х гг. наступил период относительно спокойных и мирных взаимоотношений представителей Ярославской епархии с областными музеями. Постепенно приходит обоюдное понимание необходимости грамотного подхода к сохранению оставшегося нам в наследство от прошлого образов культового назначения.

Ключевые слова: памятники иконописи, объекты культурного наследия, региональная политика, музей, Ярославская область, РПЦ, государство.

Much of Yaroslavl region’s cultural heritage consists of church art and artifacts (icons, architectural monuments, religious objects, vestments). From the beginning of the new relationship between church and state in modern Russia, active government cooperation with the church has been a distinctive feature of this process. Today one of the key facets of this relationship is the search for compromise in the transfer of religious artifacts to the Church.

Since the early 1990s the return of artifacts to the Russian Orthodox Church has been one of the key issues in protecting objects of cultural heritage in Yaroslavl region. An analysis of regional policy in the 1990s and 2000s is both necessary and timely for the development of measures and programs to return religious artifacts to the Church without any harm either to these items or to museums and society in general.

Despite the prominence of property transfer negotiations to the Church in this period, this issue has been insufficiently investigated thus far. The earliest study of this problem was by A. M. Kulemzin (2009). N. V. Mikhailova’s research in the late 2000s paid much attention to legal questions (2009), while A. B. Shukhobodskii later emphasized that “thoughtless transfer of historical and cultural property to the Church can create tension in society” (2013, 209). A. E. Musin (2010) conducted a unique investigation into the contested position of religious artifacts in modern Russia and its transfer to the church and analyzed the conflict between the Church and state cultural institutions. Scholarly attention to the problem of icon transfer from museums to the Church speaks to the state and public importance of these events. It testifies not only to a new relationship between church and state, but also to the “loyalty” of the government to the Church, in which icons became a symbol of friendship and state understanding of the need for
spiritual renewal in society through religious iconography. This research is the first attempt at complex study of state measures for the preservation of cultural heritage and of the problems in their transfer to the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1900s–2000s on the Yaroslavl regional materials.

The main legislative materials regarding the issue of property transfer to the church in general, and in Yaroslavl in particular, in the post-Soviet period are published in the Collection of the Legislation of the Russian Federation, Bulletin of Regulations of Federal Executive Authorities, and Vedomosti of the State Duma and of the administration of Yaroslavl region. Major sources also include archival materials documenting the activities of federal and local authorities, which are deposited in federal and local state archives: The State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), and the State Archive of the Yaroslavl Region (GAYO).

One of the first official documents on the process of transfer of material objects to the Church is Resolution 1372 of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on December 29, 1990, “On the procedure for transfer to religious organizations of cult buildings, materials and other religious property owned by the state.”\(^1\) In February 1991 at the meeting of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers, a decision “On the procedure for transfer of cult (prayer) buildings, materials, and other property and land plots to religious organizations” was made.\(^2\)

The key legislative acts in the course of property transfer to the Church include the order of the President of the Russian Federation on April 23, 1993 (no. 281-rp), “On the transfer of cult buildings and other property to religious organizations.”\(^3\) Resolution 248 of the Government of the Russian Federation on March 14, 1995, “On the order of transfer to religious organizations of the religious property related to federal property” (a first version of the Resolution appeared in 1994) specified that “especially valuable objects of cultural heritage of the peoples of the Russian Federation are not subject to transfer to religious associations.”\(^4\) Other laws should be noted, particularly Federal Law 125-FL “On

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freedom of conscience and religious associations;”⁵ and Federal Law 327-FL of November 30, 2010, “On the transfer of religious property from state or municipal ownership to religious organizations.”⁶

In the early 1990s the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation issued a number of orders directly regulating the process of property transfer to the Church. One of the first documents, Order 15 from January 1, 1991, “On the approval of the expert commission on review and selection of religious cult objects and antiques,” was created to allow for further transfer of relics to the Church⁷. Of equal importance is the declaration of the Soviet Ministry of Culture in June 1991, which established the necessity of the transfer of buildings to the Church, the conditions of their return, and Church guarantees of their maintenance⁸. In 1993 the Ministry of Culture sent all museums, including those in Yaroslavl region, a request “On providing information,” requiring museums to examine their religious collections to identify the objects that could be transferred to religious organizations.⁹

In Yaroslavl region as of early 1994, there were eighty-eight icons listed among museum property to be transferred to religious organizations. In total from 1995 to 1997, special orders from the Ministry of Culture resulted in the transfer of twenty urban and rural churches and monasteries, with all objects in their possession including icons, to the Church in Yaroslavl region.¹⁰

One of the most important documents of the Ministry of Culture in the late 1990s is a letter sent to the executive authorities of territorial subjects of the Russian Federation that obligated them to assume responsibility for the transfer of newly identified religious objects of historical and cultural heritage that were not within federal property¹¹. This meant that the fate of such objects would be decided by the officials in dialogue with their electorate, including those who had newly returned to the Church.

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The question of property transfer to the Yaroslavl eparchy was substantially discussed in regional periodicals. A 2004 interview with Kirill, the Archbishop of Yaroslavl and Rostov, “Sacred objects must belong to the Church,” deserves special attention. In the early 2000s this was a pressing topic in the region. Like other members of the clergy, the archbishop insisted that Yaroslavl museum storerooms contained many icons of no artistic value. Speaking about the necessity for transfer of these icons to the churches that had previously owned them, the archbishop referred to the problem of lack of proper security in rural churches and resultant frequent thefts. The archbishop also noted that in the 1990s “many issues were resolved much easier,” while today “we have no irresolvable conflicts with the regional administration,”12

The regional press was one of the first to call attention to changes in church-state relations. Since the early 1990s the press covered visits by officials with the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church and eparchies to discuss collaboration between church and state.13 A new stage in church-state relations demanded more than friendly meetings. It also required “material” updating, in particular the return of church property that had been nationalized after the revolution.

In regard to the regional practice of transferring sacred objects of cultural heritage to the Yaroslavl eparchy, the early 1990s saw a range of problems primarily related to the perceived threat to the integrity of museum collections, the possible loss of objects, and the unwillingness of regional administration to consider expert opinions. From 1991 to 1996 alone, 13 monasteries, 170 Churches, and 1 chapel were transferred to the Yaroslavl diocese by the regional administration.14

In 1993 an intense situation between the Yaroslavl museums and the regional Church arose after the Archbishop of Yaroslavl and Rostov requested that the head of administration of the Yaroslavl region A. I. Lisitsyn transfer certain icons from the museums to the eparchy.15 At the time, the Yaroslavl eparchy owned 16,000 icons. In the 1990s, the regional administration, as a rule, took the side of the Church in


As a result, in early 1993 a commission formed to address the loan of icons from regional museums to functioning churches in Yaroslavl. During the initial first months of its work, museum employees were pessimistic about the chances for compromise between the Church and regional administration. They stressed to officials that the physical condition of museum icons demanded constant monitoring and precluded their usage in liturgical practice. Museum specialists offered to find alternative means to supply churches with icons, such as the manufacture of new icons in modern icon-painting studios, the purchase of older ones in antique shops, the transfer of seized property, and public donations.

As a result of active transfer of icons from regional museums, the employees of the Yaroslavl Art Museum developed and presented a technique of transferring religious artifacts including eparchy-funded conservation and restoration work under the control of the restoration council of the museum, and loans of icons in which the museum retained the right to monitor their safekeeping. In practice these recommendations were followed only partially under certain conditions.

In December 1995 the regional commission decided to transfer one of its most famous Russian Orthodox icons, the icon of the Virgin Mary of Tolga from the Yaroslavl Art Museum to the Yaroslavl Tolga Monastery. The Department of Culture of Yaroslavl region prepared an agreement between the art museum and the monastery on the use of the icon, which was transferred in 2003. It should be noted that the experience of transferring one of the most significant relics became a “model” example of church-museum interaction on property transfers. A stationary icon case with armored glass was specially made for the icon. The monastery acquired a device to measure the indoor microclimate. The museum employees exercise regular supervision of the icon.

In 1996 and 1997 Yaroslavl museums transferred a number of icons to the Feodorovsky cathedral in Yaroslavl, as well as transfer of

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the icon of the Virgin Mary of Kazan to the Kazan Monastery.\textsuperscript{23} In 2005, twenty-two icons of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were transferred from the Yaroslavl museum and heritage site and the Yaroslavl Art Museum to the eparchy.\textsuperscript{24} These icons were the last substantial items from Yaroslavl museums that were returned to the Church.

In conclusion, the interaction of regional administration with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church was one of the important directions of Russian state policy during the transition period of the early 1990s. In this regard, the return of property to the church was a significant step in crafting a new, collaborative relationship. As a result, religious artifacts in museum collections represented an extremely difficult and ambiguous situation, in particular in regard to objects intended for regular church use.

Overall, legislative activity and official policy on the return of property to the Church, in the first post-Soviet decade appeared at the time to serve the goal of “making amends” to the Church to the detriment of many artistic artifacts. The ambiguity of regional government policy on icons and its often unilateral protection of church’s interests provoked conflict between museum employees and clergy over control of the icons. Only toward the end of the 2000s did a relatively quiet and peaceful relationship between representatives of the Yaroslavl eparchy and regional museums begin. Mutual recognition of the necessity for a competent approach to preservation remains an ongoing process.

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CZECH JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

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Keywords: contemporary history, Czech Republic, Institute for Contemporary History.

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ЧЕШСКИЙ ЖУРНАЛ НОВЕЙШЕЙ ИСТОРИИ


Ключевые слова: новейшая история, Чешская Республика, Институт новейшей истории.

The Czech Journal of Contemporary History (CJCH), founded in 2013, is an annual periodical of the Institute for Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The overall aim of this journal is to publish articles, essays, and other contributions by leading scholars in the field of contemporary history from both the Czech Republic and abroad. Particular focus is placed on Czechoslovak and Czech topics in a broader international or transnational setting. The chief editors of the journal are Vit Smetana and Kathleen Geaney. The CJCH editorial team primarily publishes articles that have been previously published in Czech
in the journal Soudobé dějiny (Contemporary History), the leading Czech-language academic journal in the field of contemporary history, in order to make them accessible to a wider readership, thereby promoting international academic discussion. At the same time, CJCH also contributes to Czech-language discourse by periodically publishing previously unpublished articles in English, which are subsequently translated into Czech for circulation in Soudobé dějiny. The CJCH is primarily intended to be an online platform, with a limited number of print copies of each issue.

In order to consider the Czech Journal of Contemporary History more closely, I shall examine the contents of its 2015 issue. Most of the contributions to this issue had previously been published in Soudobé dějiny in 2013-14 (two other pieces also first came out in Prague at that time), although all of them were specifically reworked and sometimes expanded for the CJCH. The authors, with the exception of Alessandro Catalano, are Prague-based scholars who represent the leading Czech research institutions and universities. Chronologically the research articles deal with the period from the early 1940s to the mid-1990s. Topics include the challenges of Czechoslovak foreign policy in exile during the Second World War, late socialist social policies in Czechoslovakia and the GDR, and the legacy of exiled Czechoslovak politician and political scientist Zdeněk Mlynář to anti-Semitism in the Stalin-era USSR and ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian War. The Prague Chronicle section is devoted to relevant scholarly events, while the book reviews section deals with new books within the scope of the journal that have been published in the Czech Republic and abroad; all of these contributions originally appeared in Czech.

In his article, “The British, the Americans, and the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1943,” based on a wide range of archival and published sources, Vít Smetana considers Czechoslovak foreign policy in exile in the context of great power politics in World War II. The author provides interesting (and little known) details about the so-called “self-denying ordinance” (understood at that time as an obligation for allied great powers not to conclude bilateral treaties with minor allies during the war), which was promoted by British diplomacy as one of the key principles for great power politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Smetana argues that U.S. indifference was an additional complication in London’s efforts to put this principle into political practice among the allied great powers. In Foreign Office postwar planning, the self-denying ordinance came together with various federalist projects in the region in order, paraphrasing a prominent British diplomat, to avoid “two Europes.” The author stresses that the signing of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty in December 1943 dramatically reduced the chance not only for any form of federalist solution for the region, but also for an alternative British project: a quadrilateral treaty
(Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, Poland and Great Britain). Thus, the study of negotiations related to the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty contributes to greater understanding of the broader question of postwar settlement in Central and Eastern Europe in Allied politics.

Kateřina Šimova`s article, “Renegades, Traitors, Murderers in White Coats: The Image of the ‘Jew’ as the ‘Enemy’ in the Propaganda of the Late Stalinist Period,” uses the lens of semiotic analysis to examine two notorious Stalinist campaigns to fight primarily internal “enemies:” the campaign against cosmopolitanism that started in the USSR in the late 1940s and the related Doctors` Plot of the early 1950s. Her thorough analysis of the “texts” of the campaigns (the source base draws from press materials) highlights why Jewish imagery was so instrumental in constructing the image of the enemy in the early Cold War. The author points out that the “multi-facetet” image of the Jew, which included a considerable component of otherness, offered a fertile ground for Soviet (but not only) propagandists, who easily added more negative connotations in the second campaign, as the Cold War escalated. The author also explores the Czechoslovak reverberations of the Soviet fight against “the enemy within,” noting that the Slánský trial could have provided a “script” for the Doctors` Plot. In this regard, it would also be interesting to broaden the chronology and territorial scope to include the mid-1940s and the “people`s democracies” in order to study how the pattern of anti-Semitic actions in the emerging Soviet bloc evolved from one dominated by regional and national dynamics to that of Cold War confrontation.

Tomáš Vilímek’s article, “The Tool of Power Legitimisation and Guardianship. Social Policy and Its Implementation in the Pension Systems of Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic (1970–1989),” explores the social policy of the most developed socialist economies with a focus on their pension systems. It is well known that the leaders of socialist countries paid particular attention to social policy, as it was deemed to be (and mostly was) some kind of a universal instrument to send a positive message to domestic and international audiences about the advantages of socialism. In this period, social policy had become ever more important. The years following the events of the Prague Spring in 1968 unleashed considerable opposition potential in Czechoslovakia and reverberated in other socialist countries, exacerbated by the deepening economic crisis in the region. Therefore, the author concludes, the role of social policy as a tool of legitimization of state power had intensified in these years. At the same time, however, it could hardly be fulfilled because of growing economic deficiencies. Vilímek convincingly demonstrates that pensions in both countries were the least preferable of the available social policy instruments to support loyalty mainly due to their costs. Nevertheless, they did produce new inequalities. The author also highlights both challenges and opportunities that the FRG, an obvious capitalist
Alessandro Catalano, in his article “Zdeněk Mlynář and the Search for Socialist Opposition. From an Active Politician to a Dissident to Editorial Work in Exile,” primarily analyses the samizdat-style projects carried out in exile by prominent Czechoslovak dissident and Communist Party functionary Zdeněk Mlynář. He thus partly continues the theme of the Prague Spring’s aftershocks and of the subsequent “normalization” that significantly affected Mlynář’s fate. The author relies solely on unpublished documents from the Mlynář personal archive, which is now available in the National Archive in Prague. In order to reveal the peculiarities of samizdat in this case and to evaluate its impact, Catalano highlights not only the complex structure of the Czechoslovak dissident movement and the place of Mlynář in it, but also how the professional and personal experience of this dissident influenced the evolution of his views and his choice of publishing mode for the research papers of his team. In particular, the author convincingly argues that Mlynář’s focus on western audiences with more or less relevant positions while neglecting the Czechoslovak civil society was partly motivated by the fact that he, “as a functionary of the KSČ, believed that influencing higher political spheres was more important than initiating a public debate.” As a consequence, the results of his team’s projects were not disseminated in Czech and failed to reach a wide audience. At the same time, Mlynář’s efforts served the desired purpose of influencing the “Euro-Communist” and some broader circles of the West European Left, although these political forces proved to have been of little relevance in the dramatic changes of the late 1980s in Eastern Europe. The author does not share the opinion that Mlynář’s concept of “democratic socialism” influenced his friend Mikhail Gorbachev when they both studied law at Moscow State University. Rather, he demonstrates the opposite: Gorbachev’s perestroika made the Czechoslovak dissident revive his belief in the Party as a key force of reforms “from above.” This thorough and detailed sixty-six-page article is also interesting as an overview of the life and worldview of a Communist functionary from the Soviet bloc, who attempted to reform the system while in power and to replace or reform it while in exile.

Ondřej Žíla’s article, “The War Conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Phenomenon of Ethnic Cleansing,” is an excellent example of balanced and thorough research on the complex and painful topic of the Bosnian War of 1992–95 that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia. While highlighting the imbalance in the available source base and secondary literature, which makes an unbiased and detailed study of this tragic war conflict rather problematic, the author argues that a chronological lens, which dominates much of the literature, is unlikely to be a fruitful approach in this context. Instead, Žíla stresses that one should closely
examine the local and regional dynamics at the subnational level and the complex interplay between domestic and international factors to understand the parallel tragic development of three nation-state projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author’s preliminary study along these lines led him to point out inter alia that “conclusions based on the course and extent of ethnic cleansings in a specific part of Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be generalised and applied to the entire territory of the country.”

To conclude, the Czech Journal of Contemporary History is a valuable periodical in the field of contemporary history and an important platform to make high-quality Czech scholarship more accessible to an international readership. The CJCH research materials on Czech history clearly contribute to understanding broader regional (and sometimes also global) patterns and phenomena, while the articles on subjects unrelated directly to the history of the Czech Republic demonstrate an original approach, while at times also drawing connections to Czech history and culture, thus highlighting their additional dimensions.

As the CJCH is mostly intended to serve as an online platform, it might be helpful for it to introduce the publishing modes and techniques often used in online academic publishing. For instance, it might provide particular articles (and other types of contributions) in various formats for view and download, place the journal metadata in relevant international databases (e.g. WorldCat, DOAJ, Scopus, etc.), and make articles available in online libraries in order to reach a wider readership, visibility, and recognition.

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NEW BOOKS


The book examines various aspects of the gentry estates’ development in the Black Soil provinces from the 1850s through the 1890s. Special attention is given to gentry land ownership and land use, capitalist modernization of gentry estates, the role and place of landed gentry in local government and self-government, the transformation of daily life for gentry, and the socio-psychological adaptation of landed gentry. In addition, the author explores the figure of the Russian landlord in Russian folklore.
Soviet Jehovah’s Witnesses are a fascinating case study of dissent outside of the boundaries of urban, intellectual nonconformity. Witnesses, who were generally rural, poorly educated, and utterly marginalized from society, resisted state pressure to conform. They instead constructed alternative communities based on adherence to religious principles established by the Witnesses’ international center in Brooklyn, New York. The Soviet state considered Witnesses to be the most reactionary of all underground religious movements, and used extraordinary measures to try to eliminate this threat. Yet Witnesses survived, while the Soviet system did not. After 1991, they faced continuing challenges to their right to practice their faith in post-Soviet states, as these states struggled to reconcile the proper limits on freedom of conscience with European norms and domestic concerns.

The book further develops the author`s theory regarding the anthropology of movement. Its main subject, *Homo mobilis* (mobile man), now features as a mover of colonization through space and time, from the initial populating of the planet to the medieval expansions of Europeans, Mongols, and Russians. Golovnev argues that colonization as a universal trait of living matter is far older than humankind and, in contrast to ideologically tinted “colonialism,” is a regular mechanism of natural and cultural life. The book`s three parts, Classic Variations, Major Byways of Rus, and Expanding Russia, describe the general characteristics and diversity of colonization.
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The journal “TRACTUS AEVORUM” (Latin for “the path of centuries”) focuses its attention on the twin concepts of space and transition throughout history, with particular emphasis on borders and borderlands.

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