

STRUGGLE FOR EAST-EUROPEAN EMPIRE: 1400-1700 The Crimean Khanate, Ottomans and the Rise of the Russian Empire*

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The empire of the Golden Horde, built by Batu, son of Djodji and the grand son of Genghis Khan, around 1240, was an empire which united the whole East-Europe under its domination. The Golden Horde empire comprised all of the remnants of the earlier nomadic peoples of Turkic language in the steppe area which were then known under the common name of Tatar within this new political framework. The Golden Horde ruled directly over the Eurasian steppe from Khwarezm to the Danube and over the Russian principalities in the forest zone indirectly as tribute-paying states. Already in the second half of the 13th century the western part of the steppe from the Don river to the Danube tended to become a separate political entity under the powerful emir Noghay. In the second half of the 14th century rival branches of the Djodjid dynasty, each supported by a group of the dissident clans, started a long struggle for the Ulugh-Yurd, the core of the empire in the lower Ilil (Volga) river, and for the title of Ulugh Khan which meant the supreme ruler of the empire.

Toktamish Khan restored, for a short period, the unity of the empire. When defeated by Tamerlane, his sons and dependent clans resumed the struggle for the Ulugh-Khan-ship in the western steppe area. During all this period, the Crimean peninsula, separated from the steppe by a narrow isthmus, became a refuge area for the defeated in the steppe. Around 1440 one of the grandsons of Toktamish Hajji Gerey or Giray, entrenching himself in this rich peninsula, succeeded in establishing an independent khanate. He

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minted silver coins in his name which was an indication of independence and assumed the title of **Ulugh Khan**. Descending from Toktamish Khan, he and his successors never gave up their right to the imperial patrimony on the whole Golden Horde empire, including suzerainty over the Russian principalities. In actual fact, by this time the Golden Horde was split into three independent khanates, in the Crimea, Kazan, and the Saray region in the lower Volga. The latter, ruling over the **Ulugh-Yurd**, claimed to be the only legitimate successor to the great khan-ship. Like the secessionist khanates, the Grand Duke of Muscovy, once the Ulugh-Khan's deputy over other Russian principalities, began to act independently, challenging the Golden Horde overlordship. At the same time, in the western part of the region, Lithuania under Jagellons rose as a powerful state, claiming sovereignty on the patrimony of the Golden Horde in the area and challenging the rising Giray dynasty. Thus, by the middle of the 15th century, in Eastern Europe instead of one dominant imperial power there were newly rising states which eventually came to compete for supremacy over the whole region. Because of their relation to once powerful Toktamish Khan, Giray dynasty in the Crimea seemed to have the best chance to revive the Golden Horde empire under their rule. The khans from another branch of Djodji, in control of the Saray region, embarked upon a long struggle against the Girays. The former made an alliance with the Jagellons while Girays in their turn allied themselves with the Grand Duke of Muscovy to resist the powerful rival coalition. At this juncture the Ottoman power came to support the Crimea-Muscovy axis against the powerful Lithuania-Golden Horde coalition.

In 1454 the Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, immediately after his conquest of Istanbul, sending his fleet into the Black Sea, had the allegiance as tribute-paying vassals of the local rulers such as the voyvode of Moldavia as well as of the Genoese colonies. Hajji Giray then cooperated with the Ottomans to claim his sovereignty over Caffa and other Genoese cities on the southern coasts of the Crimea. But when later on another Ottoman fleet threatened Caffa, he asserted that "Caffa was his patrimony". Mehmed the Conqueror knew well that he could not take the Genoese colonies of Caffa without cooperating with the Crimean Khan. In their turn the Genoese tried to protect their colonies by supporting on the Crimean throne a friendly khan among the sons of Hajji Giray and cooperated with the powerful chief of the Crimean aristocracy, the Beg of the principal Shirin clan. The Conqueror's diplomacy, however, managed to make Eminek, the Shirin Beg, collaborate to put on the Crimean throne a pro-Ottoman Khan. In 1475, confident of Crimean cooperation, the Conqueror immediately sent a powerful fleet to subdue all the Genoese colonies in the Crimea. Later on, always in cooperation with Eminek Beg, he brought to the Crimean throne Mengli Giray who was captured in Caffa during the Ottoman occupation. Mengli Giray recognized the Conqueror as his suzerain and described his relation to him as his "tikme" (appointee). Thus, while an Ottoman province was organized on the southern shores of the peninsula with Caffa as

the seat of an Ottoman sandjak-bey, the Crimean Khanate became a vassal state of the Ottoman empire. This new situation would create totally new conditions in the struggle for domination in East-Europe. The Ottoman presence resulted in consequences decisive for the balance of power in the region.

First, the Crimean-Moscovite axis got the upper hand in its struggle against the Lithuanian-Golden Horde coalition, and prepared the way for the final fall of the Golden Horde and the rise of the Moscovite power.

Secondly, it guaranteed the existence of the Crimean Khanate, first against the attacks of the Golden Horde Ulugh-Khans, in the period 1476-1502 and then of Russia as late as 1774.

Thirdly, the Crimea became an integral part of the Ottoman empire, politically, economically and culturally.

Fourthly, Ottoman-Polish rivalry in Moldavia and Ukraine resulted first in the rise of Cossack power and later in the formation of the Ukrainian Cossack state.

Of course, the most important development in East-Europe following the fall of the Golden Horde was the emergence of the Moscovite state as the dominant power in the region. The main factors leading to this situation can be summarized as follows:

First, Ottoman-Crimean cooperation in the years 1492-1532 is a period crucial for the rise of the Moscovite power, which is understandably ignored in Russian historiography.

Secondly, in the period 1470-1550, Russian "westernization", which made available to this originally Byzantine-Tatar state the tools of western warfare technology with fire arms, ensured its supremacy over the nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes.

Thirdly, in the emergence of the Russian empire, the role of a central bureaucratic system and skillful diplomacy cannot be underestimated. During the rise of their empire the Russian rulers avoided direct confrontation with the Ottoman empire which was the other great power in the region having the same western warfare technology. It is to be remembered that the Ottomans supplied the Crimean Khans with a soldiery with fire arms only to the extent to which the Khanate was not acquiring too much power to become a threat to the Ottoman domination in the Crimea. Ironically, then no one could anticipate future developments which were bound to make Russia a major threat to the Ottoman rule over the Crimea and the Black Sea. In its efforts to inherit the Golden Horde heritage, Moscow gave refuge to the

dissident Genghiskhanids and Tatar clans in its territory and later on used them for its claim to the succession of the Ulugh Khans of the Golden Horde.

Fourthly, it should be added that Moscow flourished as an economic power by becoming the principal market place of the furs of Siberia and the north, as well as of European exports, mainly woolen cloth. After the annexation of Kazan and Astrakhan (Ejderhan), Grand Dukes encouraged the English to establish a route to Asia for the spice and silk trade via Moscow-Caucasus or Astrakhan.

Perhaps an equally important development was that Muscovy offered an attractive market place for Tatar tribes, in particular the Noghays in the Astrakhan-Kazan region for horses in exchange for western luxury textiles. Ulu-Noghay tribes were to play a crucial role as allies of Muscovy against the Crimeans in the Muscovite expansion in the Volga basin in the period 1521-1554.

Incidentally, starting from the reign of Ivan III in 1496 the Grand Dukes succeeded in obtaining from the Ottoman sultans trade privileges in the Ottoman territories including Azak (Azov) and Caffa. From 1496 onwards, with the exchange of embassies between Istanbul and Moscow, the traffic between the two countries substantially increased, the main items of exchange being Russian furs and Bursa silk brocades.

Mengli Giray, architect of the Crimean-Muscovite alliance against the Lithuania-Poland commonwealth, strongly supported Ottoman-Moscovite rapprochement in the period 1492-1512. In their rivalry with Poland over Moldavia, Ottoman Sultans Selim I (1512-1520) and Süleyman I (1520-1566) continued good relations with the Russian rulers till the Khanate under Sahib Giray (1532-1551) could eventually convince the Ottoman government of the Moscovite threat of invasion of the heritage of the Golden Horde in the Iül (Volga) basin.

Developments during the crucial period 1532-1552 constitute a turning point in the history of East-Europe, a dominant power, emerging again to achieve the political unity of the whole region. The decisive struggle for the Golden Horde heritage now was between Muscovy and the Crimean Khanate.

After the final blow to the Golden Horde by Mengli Giray in 1502 the Girays twice established their control in Kazan and Astrakhan, first under the Ulugh Khan Mehmed Giray (1512-1524) and then under Sahib Giray (1532-1551). Mehmed Giray had even succeeded in re-imposing tribute on Muscovy as in the time of Toktamish Khan. In both cases, the Crimeans did not receive full approval of the Ottomans although the latter expressed at the same time its concern against Moscow's aggressive policy. When by 1551

Sahib Giray achieved his imperial ambition in the Volga basin, the Ottoman Sultan became suspicious. Süleyman took action against him when Sahib Giray then put forth his claims also on the Ottoman province of Caffa. Ottoman viziers then forged a plan to get rid of the ambitious Khan, not forgetting, however, the Czar's claims on the Khanate of Kazan. The Sultan then ostensibly appointed Devlet Giray, the Khan of Kazan, actually as Khan of the Crimea in lieu of Sahib Giray. Devlet Giray would first eliminate Sahib and then move immediately to aid Kazan against the Russians. Ivan IV, who had declared himself Czar or Ulugh Khan (the Golden Horde title used by Ivan IV in his letters to the Tatars), in 1547 watching the developments in Kazan, Crimea and Istanbul, saw that the right moment had come to invade the Ulugh Yurd, the Golden Horde's imperial domain in the Volga basin. Devlet Giray succeeded in eliminating Sahib Giray in the Crimea but was too late to march to Kazan before Ivan IV, moving with his huge army, strengthened with powerful artillery, captured Kazan (1552). Taking a strategically masterful decision, the Czar had profited from the disorders in the Crimea. Devlet Giray's subsequent campaigns against Moscow did not change the state of affairs and two years later Ivan IV, always supported by the Noghay clans put an end to the Khanate of Astrakhan, invading the Ulugh-Yurd. Assuming the titles of **Tsar Kazanskii** and **Tsar Astrakhanskii**, or **Ulugh Khan of Kazan and Astrakhan**, Ivan IV asserted his ambition to inherit the Golden Horde empire. The Crimean Khan and the Ottoman Sultan were caught by a **fait-accompl** although they would never accept Moscow's invasion of the Ulugh-Yurd. Then, the Crimean Khan started a series of campaigns against the Russians. Already in 1563 Devlet Giray warned Russia, saying to the Czar's ambassador Nagoy: "The Sultan has mobilized all Muslims against the Czar who invaded the land of the Muslims; he will conquer Astrakhan and enthrone me as khan there. It is better if you would give Astrakhan to me now so that there will be no war" (Solovyev, IV, 219). However, the Ottoman-Crimean campaign to recover Astrakhan had to be postponed for six years. The Khanate and the Ottoman government neither recognized nor used title of "Çar" (Tsar) or Ulugh Khan for the Russian ruler as late as the year 1643. The strategic goal of the campaign of 1569 was to expel the Moscovites from the lower Iül (Volga) basin where Saray and Astrakhan stood. An Ottoman army and fleet went up the Don River, reaching the Perevolok (later Stalingrad, now Volgograd) area near the ruined city of Yeni-Saray and began to dig out a canal in order to take the ships to the Iül and go against the Russians in Astrakhan. In Astrakhan the Russians had built a strong fortress on an island threatening the caravan road from Central Asia and the traffic from the Caspian Sea. Czar Ivan had already begun negotiations with the Shah of Iran, sending him a much needed artillery unit to be used against the Ottomans. The Shah was warned that once Astrakhan came under Ottoman control, Iran was to be exposed to attacks from the rear, which in fact was one of the Ottoman goals in this campaign.

These details should illustrate well the strategic and ideological issues involved in this first direct confrontation between the Russian and Ottoman empires. Ivan IV already had the control of the Volga basin with title of *Tsar'* or *Ulugh Khan*. In his turn, declaring himself the protector of Muslims in the area and of pilgrims and merchants from Central Asia, the Ottoman Sultan wanted to assert his own supremacy in the region against the Czar's ambition to regenerate the Golden Horde empire under his rule. In fact, the war of 1569 was the first confrontation of the Ottoman and Russian empires for domination in East-Europe, the scene of struggle being at this stage the lower Volga basin. The Russian advance in later periods would move the main front to the western part of the steppe or *Desht*, including Azak, Ukraine, the Crimea and finally the Black Sea. Now dwarfed by the tremendous growth of the Moscovite power, the Crimean Khanate itself was under the threat of a Russian invasion if the Ottoman empire was not behind it. The question is asked why the Ottoman empire, then at the peak of its military might, gave up the struggle and allowed Muscovy to replace the Golden Horde empire in Kazan and Astrakhan.

In the Ottoman supreme council there was a strong faction arguing that campaigns in the north were too expensive, an adventure which might in the end make the Crimean Khan too powerful while vital issues for the empire in the Mediterranean and Central Europe, they argued, required immediate action. Vizier Lala Mustafa, a rival of the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed, who was supporting an active policy in the north, made the council eventually decide for the invasion of Cyprus in 1570. Then, the defeat at Lepanto the next year kept the empire critically busy in the Mediterranean.

Also, the Crimean tribal aristocracy, *mirzas*, embodying the Turco-Mongol steppe tradition, opposed growing Ottoman influence and control over the Khanate and often joined the dissident pretenders to the throne in the Crimea. Russia tried to profit from such a resistance to reinforce its influence over the Khanate (incidents of Mehmed and Shahin Girays). Consequently, seeing the reaction against too much involvement in the North the Ottoman government chose to leave decisions on northern affairs to the discretion of the Crimeans. It is to be noted that, from a tradition established under Mengli Giray I, Russian envoys and ambassadors could not proceed to Istanbul unless they first visited the Khan in Bahçesaray and explained the purpose of their visit to Istanbul. Well aware of this situation, Russian diplomacy encouraged the Ottoman non-involvement policy in the north by a subtle diplomacy, at once solemnly denying Crimean accusations that Russians were converting mosques into churches while harassing Muslim populations in the Kazan and Astrakhan areas. Also, the Czars carefully avoided participating in the anti-Ottoman coalitions formed in the west until 1686 when Peter the Great decided to join the Holy League. When in 1637 the Cossacks captured Azak and offered the fortress to the Czar, he wisely declined the offer and the Cossacks had to evacuate the place in 1642.

The Cossack question dominated East-European politics in the seventeenth century. Then, for the Ottomans, the Cossack threat became one of the most urgent problems and in the second half of the century attempts to control Ukraine and the Cossacks of Dnieper brought the three major powers in East-Europe, the Ottoman-Crimean block, Poland, and Russia into a decisive confrontation. Again, the Khanate, under the protection of the Ottomans, played a major role in developments in the region during this period. The Cossacks of Dnieper, equipped with fire arms, a replica of the Ottoman uç (frontier) organization of *akıncıs* (raiders), were now making devastating sea raids to the settled areas all along the Black Sea coasts, including the Bosphorus. In the face of this growing threat, the Ottomans had to organize a general command with a *Beylerbeylik* on the western Black Sea coast from Özü to Thrace, build new fortresses on the mouth of Dnieper, and make several major campaigns against Poland and Cossacks in the century. With the creation of the Ottoman province of Kamenice (Podolski Kaminiec) and the occupation of western Ukraine, the Ottoman empire was then vitally involved in all developments in the region.

It is rightly underlined that the developments in the period 1647-1654 constituted a new turning point in the history of East Europe. Under Islam Giray III (1644-1654) Khmel'nitski, the leader of the Dnieper Cossacks approached the Crimean Khanate and the Ottomans in the hope of establishing a Cossack state in the Ukraine which could have been organized as an Ottoman vassal state like Moldavia or Transylvania. But Islam Giray did not receive full support for his policy at the Ottoman Porte. The Ottomans were unable to take advantage of these favorable conditions in the north mainly because of the crisis in Transylvania and the protracted Cretan war against the Venetians in the Mediterranean (1645-1669).

Another significant development was the Polish-Russian agreement of 1647 which terminated the long rivalry between the two Christian-Slavic states and led to the formation of a common front against the Crimea and the Ottomans. This rapprochement was a direct result of the growing Crimean-Ottoman pressure on Poland, from which eventually Russia profited. In 1654, Khmel'nitski chose union with Russia under the agreement of Pereiaslav. This was a decisive historic development, similar to the Russian invasion of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, now making the Moscovite state a dominant power, not only in the eastern but also in the western part of East-Europe. In the face of the change in the balance of power the Crimean government, however, denounced the Czar's new title of "*Tsar'* of the West and the East" (*Magrib ve Maşrik Padişahı*) and added that "if you are conceited by relying on your guns and cannons, we ourselves rely on God... If you do not give back to Poland the fortresses which you captured, we are determined to fall upon you and the Dnieper Cossacks." These words meant actually the confession of the hopeless

situation of the Crimea in the face of the fire power of the Russian armies. Anyhow, in the end, God did not help the Crimeans. It may be said that until 1654 Russia had been an eastern power (Maşrık Padişahı) and only after that date it became a dominant power all over East-Europe, prepared to play a significant role in European politics. For Russia two areas were left to be penetrated, the Baltic and the Black Sea regions, to make Russia full member of the European state system. As far as the Ottomans were concerned, the Russian empire now became a neighbor to the Ottoman empire in the Ukraine and the immediate threat to the Crimea and the Black Sea. The Porte and the Crimean Khanate did not recognize the subjection of the Cossacks to the Czar and always claimed suzerainty rights over the Ukraine. Becoming aware of the vital threat to its northern Black Sea possessions and the Crimea represented by the union of the Dnieper Cossacks with Russia, the Ottoman government, which was now steered by the energetic Köprülü viziers, decided to drive the Russians out of Ukraine. In 1678 Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa and Crimean Khan Murad Giray invaded Ukraine and laid siege to the strategic city of Çıhrin.

The Russian army came to the aid of the besieged city, and fierce battles were fought in front of the fortress. This was the first full-fledged confrontation between the armies of the two empires. Now, the issue of Russian domination of East-Europe was to be decided by the result of this struggle in the heart of Ukraine. Despite the Ottoman-Crimean temporary success (Murad Giray Khan's driving back four Russian attacks to relieve the besieged city and the capture of Çıhrin), the Ottoman invasion of the Ukraine did not have lasting results. Then, concerned with the developments in Hungary, the Porte realized that it could not sustain a long war against Russia for Ukraine.

The Ottoman invasion of Ukraine was all the same a warning to Russia not to dare to exploit its new position against the Ottoman-Crimean possessions. The new balance of power following the Ottoman campaign of 1678 in East-Europe would drastically change only when the Ottoman military might would totally collapse at the hands of the Austrian-German armies in the years 1683-1686. In 1681 the peace treaty signed after the fall of Çıhrin had not basically altered the traditional pattern of relations between the Khanate and Russia. Negotiations started in Bahçesaray and the provisions reached there were first ratified by the Khan who reported it in a memorandum to the sultan. Only after that ratification did the ambassadors leave for Istanbul to finalize and obtain the sultan's ratification. In a letter to the Czar the Ottoman sultan said: "The Khan Murad Giray is my agent and intermediary." As noted above it was an ancient custom that no Russian embassy left for Istanbul before he first visited the Khan's Palace at Bahçesaray and received his permission. This practice originated from Mengli Giray's time when the Khan mediated between his ally Ivan III and his suzerian Bayezid II for the establishment of friendly relations between the two

countries. Later Mehmed Giray I (1514-1523), claiming to be the heir to the Golden Horde Ulugh Khans, re-imposed the tribute on the Grand Duke. The Ottoman sultans always respected this Crimean claim and carried on their relations with Russia through Bahçesaray when the treaty of Istanbul of 1700 abolished the rule.

The Holy League, concluded between the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of Poland, and Venice with the Pope's consecration in 1684, made great efforts to include Russia in the alliance from the beginning. Tsarist diplomacy tried to exploit its position to elicit maximum profits from both the Ottomans and the Holy League, particularly at the expense of Poland. Hoping to prevent the opening of a new front in the north, the Ottomans and the Crimeans were ready to negotiate Russian proposals. These included trade privileges, and the delivery of the salt beds on the Crimean border which were badly needed by the Cossacks. Interestingly, a special request for the prayers for the Czar at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul was among the Russian demands. The sensitive issue of the Cossacks was never brought up by the Ottomans in the course of these negotiations, which meant Ottoman recognition of the state of affairs in the Ukraine.

In the Crimea, the Czar was particularly active at Bahçesaray to prevent a peace settlement between the Khanate and Poland. The latter had achieved nothing against the Ottoman-Crimean forces in the years 1684-1686. On the other side, Russia, exploiting the allies' concern to open a new front against the Ottomans in the north, demanded the final confirmation of the Andrussovo treaty with Poland, which meant to confirm the final surrender of Smolensk and Kiev to Russia. Pressed by its allies, Poland finally yielded to the Russian demands. Thus, by skillful diplomatic maneuvers Russia had succeeded in having the Ottoman Empire and Poland recognize its sovereignty over the Ukraine. We shall see that in 1686 Russia's joining the Holy League would result in the collapse of the Ottoman power in East-Europe and initiate Russian penetration into the Black Sea zone.

In this game Poland was one of the principal losers. The Polish government now abandoned all hopes of recovering the Ukraine only with the anticipation that to compensate its loss it would take back Kaminić, and annex Moldavia and the Ottoman Black Sea port of Akkerman. In a message to the Voyvode of Moldavia, John Sobieski could say: "While the Czar was going to invade the Crimea, the Polish army would join that of the Holy Roman Emperor in Adrianople and then they would march together to capture Constantinople."

The first result of Russia's joining the League was that the Crimean Khan, awaiting a Russian invasion, could not leave the Crimea to join Ottoman forces in Hungary. In 1687 an army of one-hundred-thousand

Russians and fifty-thousand Cossacks under V. Galitsin headed for the Crimea, and John Sobieski came to lay siege to Kaminić. The Ottoman-Crimean army forced the Polish King to retreat while the huge Russian army, unable to cross the steppe which was burnt by the Tatars, also had to retreat. The Cossack Hetman Samoylovic, accused of treason, was replaced by Mazeppa.

In the following year it was the Tatars' turn to attack. They raided as far as Lwów and forced Sobieski to retreat from Kaminić once more. Russians would come back only in the spring 1689 after long preparations. This time the Russian army, including fifty-thousand Cossacks under Mazeppa, was reinforced with a formidable artillery of 350 cannons. The Crimean intelligence reported to the Sultan that Russian plans were to invade the Crimea and march against Istanbul. During the four days' battle in front of the isthmus of Or-Kapı, the Tatars blocked the way into the peninsula and their light cavalry at large harassed the enemy. They could not penetrate the Russian defenses reinforced by the rows of war chariots and heavy artillery. In the end the Russian army, suffering from lack of water and provisions, had to retreat again. Although the Russian plan for the invasion of the Crimea was a failure, the Tatars were shocked and found their position hopeless before the Russian armies, all the more so because the Ottomans, engaged in a difficult war against Austrian-German armies in Hungary, were totally incapable of sending aid.

It is to be emphasized that, because of the lack of water supply and fodder for the animals coupled with the harassment of the Tatar cavalry, the retreat of the Russian army turned out to be a very difficult operation. After that the Russians delayed a new campaign for six years. It became evident that unless an appropriate logistics enabling the huge armies to cross the steppe zone was created, there was no chance for Russian as well as Polish armies to realize their invasion plans in the south. This situation is a key point to understand one-thousand years of the East-European history. It explains why only the Euro-Asian pastoralist tribes with their light cavalry and mobility adapted to the steppe conditions and held a continuous control of the steppe zone in the face of the foot soldiery of the settled peoples of the forest zone. It was the formation of the cossacktum on the border zone, adopting a similar life style and organization as nomads, that was destined to bring about a revolutionary change in the struggle. What made them particularly capable of successfully fighting against the Tatars was their adoption of the fire arms and the support they received in materials from the Polish and Moscovite states from the mid-sixteenth century onward. Their union with Russia to which they provided an experienced military force of key importance should not be minimized in the final supremacy of the Russian Empire.

In the years 1686-1689 the northern borders of the empire were successfully defended whereas on the Hungarian front the Austrian-German armies invaded the whole of Hungary, took Belgrade, and penetrated as far as Üsküp (Skopje) in the heart of the Balkans. The Crimean forces under Selim Giray (1670-1677, 1684-1691 and 1691-1698) joined the Ottoman forces there, and the Ottoman-Crimean forces won their first significant victory against the Austrian armies at the strategic Balkan pass of Kachanack near Üsküp, and the enemy was driven back to the other side of the Sava River (1689). Selim Giray was greeted in Istanbul as the savior of the "state and religion."

When the Crimean troops were away in the Balkans and Transylvania Moscow was ordering Cossacks to capture the Tatar defenses on the border. In 1695 the Cossacks under Pani made a daring raid to the region between Akkerman and Özü on the Black Sea coast. However, all the Polish attempts to capture Kaminić and to invade Moldavia were unsuccessful. Now with French support, the Porte made attempts to achieve a separate peace with Poland. In 1692 the new Khan Safa Giray told the King that Kaminić could be evacuated and the Crimean sovereignty rights over the Ukraine given up if the King agreed to a separate peace. The Khan and the Ottomans said they would even join the Poles in their fight against Russia to recover the Ukraine, Smolensk, and Chernigov. Later, during the negotiations at Karlovetz in 1699, Sobieski would say in a letter to his people that acquisition of a few places in Moldavia could never be considered a compensation for the losses to Russia.

Thus, sovereignty over Ukraine continued to be one of the principal issues during the war years. It is interesting that Selim Giray, in his third khanship, told the Poles that the Khanate would never give up its rights over the Ukraine.

Czar Peter I, now changing Russian strategy, decided to capture first the Ottoman Azak which would ensure his communication with the bases in his home country. To intercept aid to Azak, Cossack ships were already cruising in the Sea of Azak in the spring of 1695.

During all along the long war, Crimeans and Ottomans had the luck to have in Selim Giray a wise and brave leader. In 1695 his intelligence showed the bitter reality that Azak and Crimea were under the imminent danger of a Russian invasion and Ottoman military aid was now absolutely necessary on this front. Instead, totally unaware of the Russian plans and ignoring the Khan's warnings, the Porte was insisting that the Khan should immediately leave the Crimea to join the Sultan's army on the Hungarian front. In July 1695 while the Czar came to besiege the fortress of Azak, the Cossacks under the Russian commander Sheremetiev attacked the Crimean defenses on the border in the west. After taking Gazi-Kerman, these forces

advanced as far as Ferah-Kerman on the Crimean isthmus, thus threatening to invade the Crimea itself. The Crimean troops under Kaplan Giray and Şahin Giray (the Khan Selim Giray was then on the Danube with the Ottoman army) foiled the Russian attacks under a heavy Russian artillery fire against Azak. After a siege of six days the Czar decided to retreat after building a fortress facing Azak.

The Russian retreat was explained both by the delay in the construction of the river fleet and the Tatar attacks on the supply lines of the Russian army. However, in the meantime Cossacks and Russian troops under Sheremetiev had succeeded in capturing the Crimean fortresses of Nusret-Kerman, Şah-Kerman, and Mubarek-Kerman on the border.

In May 1696, employing engineers from Austria, Holland, Prussia, and Venice, the Czar succeeded in putting a strong fleet on the Don River and now in full trust marched against Azak. While Sheremetiev and Zaporozian Cossacks advanced in the direction of the lower Dnieper and the Crimea, the Russian army was able to encircle Azak. On the sea side the Cossack fleet had intercepted Ottoman relief convoys to the fortress. Cossacks were also active on the land trying to foil the Crimean attempts to bring aid to Azak. Although the Porte realized now the grave situation in the north, the time was overdue for the necessary measures to reinforce the fortress against the powerful Russian army. In an emergency meeting the Grand Vizier admitted that if Azak fell, not only the Black Sea coasts but Istanbul itself would come under Russian threat. Azak surrendered on August 17, 1696. Before he returned home the Czar converted it into a Russian stronghold on the shores of the Black Sea. Now the Crimea found itself surrounded on two sides since the Dnieper Cossacks coming from the west continued their raids on the Crimean coasts. After the fall of Azak the Crimeans sent messengers to Istanbul saying that unless a strong Ottoman defense was provided the Crimea could not resist long in the face of the Russian armies equipped with a formidable artillery. In the last years of the war Crimean attempts to take back the lost fortresses on the Ukrainian border were not successful.

At the peace negotiations in Karlowetz, the Ottoman delegation demanded the surrender of the fortress of Azak, and asserted that the final peace would be considered concluded only after the approval of the Crimean Khan. The Russian delegation not only categorically refused such conditions but demanded the surrender of Kerch, the gate to the Black Sea. Since no progress was possible, only an armistice of two years was agreed between Russia and the Porte at Karlowetz. In the peace treaty concluded with Poland the Porte agreed to the surrender of Kaminić and Ottoman sovereignty claims over the Ukraine.

Even after Karlowetz, the Crimeans were in fear of a renewed Russian attack. Ingoing the Crimean Khan, the Czar now sent his ambassador for peace negotiations directly to Istanbul on a galleon constructed at Azov.

In the peace treaty concluded in Istanbul in 1700, demilitarized zones were defined around the Crimea for the safety of the Khanate and on the banks of the Dnieper River. Perhaps the most important provisions of the treaty were the abrogation of all kinds of practices reminiscent of the Khan's suzerainty over Russia, that is annual "tribute" and the obligation to obtain the Khan's permission for the Russian ambassadors to go to Istanbul. A separate provision stipulated that a peaceful solution of the disputes arising between the Crimeans and the Cossacks was to be negotiated directly between the Ottoman and Russian governments. Thus, under these provisions the Khan and the Hetman were losing the freedom of action in favor of a closer control of the two imperial governments. The Czar's claim to the great power status was also manifest in the provision stipulating that Russian ambassadors to the Sultan should be treated in the same way as those of the other European states. The Sultan also accepted the responsibility of making Tatars apply and respect the provisions regulating Crimean-Russian relations.

Drastically changing the balance of power in East-Europe, the treaty of Istanbul ushered in a new period as far as the Khanate and the Ottoman Empire were concerned. Now the Crimean Khanate was no more in a position to be a threat to the Russian territories including the Ukraine. In fact, weakened and reduced in status, it was itself open to Russian invasions, and the Crimeans were bitterly aware of the drastic change in their position vis-a-vis the Russians. Azak provided the Czar a stronghold to reach the Crimea at any moment and threaten even the Ottoman capital. Perhaps the most important development was Russia's joining the European concert of states which it fully exploited to partition and invade the Ottoman territories in the 18th and 19th centuries. For the following period the Porte, taking advantage of the new conflict in the north between Sweden and Russia, declared war against Russia and recovered Azak in 1711. Then, the Ottoman state and the Crimean Khanate emerged as the staunch defenders of the independence and territorial integrity of Poland against Russia.

To sum up, historically the Muscovian state is to be considered as the heir to the Golden Horde empire. With this historical perspective we can better understand the origin and formation of the Russian empire in East-Europe. Actually, the first step was the Russian invasion of the whole Volga basin down to Astrakhan, including the quasi-sacred region of the two Sarays of the Ulugh-Khans. It was after this development that the Russian state was able to challenge the power of the Commonwealth of Lithuania-Poland in the west and to annex the remaining Russian principalities and Ukraine. Claiming rights as the legitimate heirs to the legacy of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khans came up against Russian expansion in the east as well as in

Ukraine. They had lost the contention in the east already in mid-16th century. In the following century, Ukraine became the principal scene of rivalry now involving the Ottoman Empire directly. It was to ensure the autonomy of the area that the Ottomans fought their first major war against the Russian Empire in Ukraine in 1678. However, the Long War (1683-1699) against the Holy League which the Czar joined in 1686 gave him the golden opportunity to descend to the Black Sea by capturing Azak as well as to consolidate its grip on the territories taken from Poland, Smolensk, and Ukraine. In the treaty of Istanbul of 1700, both the Khanate and the Ottoman Empire had to recognize the full control of East-Europe by the Czar. At the same time, Russia became a full member of the European state system while the Ottoman Empire was now considered an area for further conquests by Russia and Austria. By capturing Azak, Russia had gained a position to invade the Crimean Khanate, the last remnant of the Golden Horde Empire.

As for the Ottoman-Crimean cooperation in the face of the Russian expansion, throughout their partnership the Crimeans and Ottomans were not always in harmony in their reaction to the developments in East-Europe. While directly under the threat of the Cossacks and then of the Russian armies, the Crimeans wanted the Ottoman Empire to give full support to the Khanate and to mobilize the Ottoman forces against them. The Ottomans themselves, having to concentrate their forces against the more pressing tasks in Hungary or the Mediterranean, always postponed action in the north and what is more they pressed the Crimeans to join the imperial campaigns in the western fronts. This innate conflict not infrequently resulted in alienation of the *mirzas* from the Ottomans, or even to rebel against the Khans who subserviently followed orders from Istanbul. While Ottomans reminded Islamic solidarity and the fact that the ultimate safety and well-being of both countries depended on close cooperation on all fronts, Crimean *mirzas* argued that their own homes and families were in immediate danger when they left Crimea to be defenseless in front of a possible Cossack or Russian invasion.

The danger became imminent when during the Long War Russian armies came to invade the Crimea twice and occupied Azak. In the 18th century the peninsula was, in fact, invaded three times and became the scene of massacres and deliberate destruction by Russian armies. During the disastrous war of 1768-1774 the *mirzas*, seeing the Ottomans totally incapable of defending the Crimea, sought to compromise with the Czar. The Russians first appeared to support Crimean independence against the Ottomans in 1774 which proved to be only a stratagem to invade the Crimea and all the territories belonging to the Khanate from Dniester to Circassia in 1783. The Russian governments adopted a systematic policy to drive out and annihilate the Tatar-Turkish Muslim population in the Crimea in order to transform the peninsula into a Russian base for further expansion in the south. Russian rule over the Crimea saw the shameless plunder of the lands

of the Crimean Tatars, a cynical policy to force hundreds of thousands of Tatars to leave their homes to migrate to Turkey, and a systematic policy to eradicate Turkish-Tatar culture in the land.

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