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Wars for the Legacy of the Golden Horde in Eurasia in the 15th–16th Centuries: Causes, Main Stages, and Historical Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the causes, progression, outcomes, and historical consequences of wars in Eurasia over the historical legacy of the Golden Horde among states such as Muscovy, the Crimean Khanate, and the Kazan Khanate during the late 15th to 16th centuries. Primary sources include interviews with representatives of socio-political movements of indigenous Eurasian peoples. The article critiques the prevailing Russian historiographical narrative that frames these conflicts as a dichotomy between civilization and barbarism. Instead, it argues that Moscow's imperialist ambitions, fueled by an ideology formed under the Rurik dynasty, were the primary drivers. This ideology mixed xenophobic perceptions of indigenous peoples with hostility toward Orthodox Christianity, particularly after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. This framing enabled Moscow to present its expansion as a restoration of historical justice and a response to the destruction of the "Second Rome".

Keywords: Crimean Khanate, Eurasia, Golden Horde legacy, Kazan Khanate, War.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has reignited interest in the historical roots of Moscow's imperial and expansionist traditions. This phenomenon, seemingly outdated in the context of modern international relations, reflects a deeply ingrained expansionist mindset. The authors argue that understanding these roots is critical for addressing contemporary crises and restraining Russia's imperial ambitions.

Historical analogies to the modern conflict can be found in the wars waged by Moscow shortly after its separation from the Golden Horde in the late 15th century. During this era, Moscow engaged in protracted conflicts with neighboring states, asserting claims to the political heritage of multiple key medieval empires, including the Golden Horde.

The historical and geopolitical processes that took shape in Eurasia during the late 15th and 16th centuries exhibit numerous parallels with the contemporary situation (Beckwith, 2011; Diesen & Lukin, 2022). Following the disintegration of the Golden Horde, several successor states emerged - the Crimean, Kazan, and Astrakhan Khanates - each, to varying degrees, laying claim to the legacy of the former Mongol empire (Pirtea, 2021). However, it was the Muscovite state that advanced the most ambitious claims to political succession. Despite its civilizational and religious differences from its erstwhile suzerain, Moscow swiftly adopted a strategy of territorial consolidation aimed not only at the former lands of Kyivan Rus but also at those of the Golden Horde.

In this context, Muscovy's expansionist policies manifested in active military campaigns against neighboring entities, including the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Novgorod Republic, and the aforementioned khanates.

Thus, the imperial traditions of the Russian Federation cannot be understood merely as a consequence of the short-term objectives of Vladimir Putin's regime. Rather, they are deeply embedded in a long-standing ideological and politico-military tradition, established during the formative phase of the Muscovite state. Accordingly, any attempt to understand the origins of the current military conflict must include a critical examination of the historical trajectory of Russian expansionism in the early modern period. As Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sports Dauren Abayev rightly emphasized during the recent international conference titled Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Golden Horde in Zhezkazgan in 2022, "after the collapse of the Horde, the Kazakh, Astrakhan, Siberian, Kazan, Khiva, Bukhara, Kasimov Khanates, and the Nogai Horde emerged on the huge Eurasian territories. We welcome such scientific debates, but it is important not to forget about their main objective and mission" – the search for historical truth" (Bulatkulova, 2022).

The relevance of this topic is further emphasized by its underrepresentation in both Ukrainian and international historiography. This article aims to shed light on these historical events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the subject of Eurasian wars for the Golden Horde's legacy remains nascent. While the wars of the 15th–16th centuries have not been comprehensively studied in Ukrainian historiography, notable contributions have been made by scholars such as Serhiy Hromenko, who has examined the causes, progression, and outcomes of the rivalry between Muscovy and the Crimean Khanate in the 16th century (Hromenko, 2015, 2020).

A new method for researching one of the less well-known Mongolian successor republics is presented by Marie Favereau (2021). The Horde merely reinvented itself, according to Favereau, who rejects the lineal historical paradigm of rise-stagnation-fall. This time, the begs, non-Chinggisid military commanders, who ruled the Kazakh, Uzbek, Nogai, Crimean, Kazan, Ibir-Sibir, and Astrakhan khanates, were in charge. The obvious inference is that the nomadic Horde kept reorganizing itself until the commercial and social base it was founded on was altered by the advent of European colonization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ability to integrate and integrate several areas of research, both in the history of the Mongol Empire and Central Asia more generally, is a definite strength of Favereau's methodology.

Ukrainian researcher Kovalchyk (2017) notes that the Crimean Khanate was at its peak of dominance at the end of the 16th century. It fought for the regions that made up the vast state of the Golden Horde beginning in the late 14th century. Mengli I Giray destroyed the Great Horde in 1502, destroying its capital. The Crimean Khanate, along with other nations founded following the collapse of the Golden Horde, struggled for dominance over a broad territory. Actually, the first "victim" was the Great Horde, a state established between the Don and Ural rivers in the center of the former Golden Horde (it was known as the Yaik River until 1775, when Catherine II ordered it to be renamed the Ural in an effort to erase the memory of the Pugachev uprising). The Golden Horde broke up into several republics, including the Astrakhan Khanate (1460), the Kazan Khanate (1445), the Siberian Khanate (1490), and the Crimean Khanate. The Grand Duchy of Moscow, the Crimean Khanate, the Kazan Khanate, the Astrakhan Khanate, and the united kingdom of the Jagiellons, Poland and Lithuania, were among the organizations that engaged in combat over the territories of the Golden Horde. The conflict between Moscow and the Crimean Khanate was the biggest conflict of the 16th century. Gaining control over the Tatar nations after the Mongol invasion was the aim of the conflict. Economic factors also played a role in the dispute. The eastern territories and the gains from trade between the East and the West were the main topics of discussion. From the Black Sea to Bukhara in Central Asia, there were canals and caravan routes. Meanwhile, in this instance, the Crimean Khanate refrained from taking part in this conflict. This conflict piqued the interest of nations with Central Asian interests and sway, including Persia, the Uzbek Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara, Moscow, the Crimean Khanate's principal adversary, and the Ottoman Empire. The most thorough and in-depth analysis of Moscow politics and the tactics used in political conflict during the Golden Horde era may likely be found in Kovalchyk's (2017) book.

However, the Crimean Khanate became a rival of the Great Horde since it was thought to be the Golden Horde's logical heir. Since Sarai also held the view that they were the only descendants of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khanate viewed the Great Horde as a rival. In order to expand its dominance over the kingdoms that had emerged following the fall of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khanate thought that the Great Horde would be its inevitable adversary. With the exception of the Great Horde and the Crimean Khanate, none of the Tatar states that arose from the ruins of the Golden Horde the Kazan Khanate, the Astrakhan Khanate, and the Siberian Khanate had the actual authority to claim to be descended from the Golden Horde, and a conflict over dominance over the Tatar khanates was to ensue. As a result, the Crimean Khanate consented to be influenced by Moscow's long-term strategy. The Crimean Tatars, spurred on by Moscow, wiped out the state established on the remains of

the Golden Horde and destroyed Sarai, the capital of the Great Horde. This was a great victory for Moscow, which eliminated one of the eastern threats to the war for control of Asia and Eastern Europe following the fall of the Golden Horde with the help of the Crimean Tatars.

Robert Bedeski (2017), a Canadian researcher, thinks that when Kazan and other southeast regions were conquered and added to Muscovy's empire in 1552, the trauma of Russian defeat and Mongol invasion was erased. This made it possible for Russia to advance eastward and eventually include Siberia and Central Asia in her empire.

In his study of "Eurasia after the Mongols", Thomas Allsen (2015) asserts that Moscow's forward policy on the steppe was driven by the need for markets, territory, resources, and security. The Manchus and Russians were able to acquire enough military horses to effectively confront the nomads on their own territory through enhanced domestic production and trade agreements. The researcher also points out that the numerous candidates for leadership positions and their constant succession disputes were contributing factors to the political devolution among the nomads. The Chinggisid heritage was claimed by those who came after the Mongols usurped the religion and sacred lands of their Turkic forebears.

In light of the scarcity of comprehensive studies and the ideological bias in Russian academic works, this research relies heavily on interviews with representatives of indigenous peoples who experienced Moscow's imperial expansion. These groups include the Kazan Tatars, Chuvash, Mari, and Crimean peoples. Public figures and experts like R. Kashapov (Prokhvesora, 2023), I. Ivanov (Prokhvesora, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c), and V. Tanakov (Prokhvesora, 2022d) have provided invaluable insights.

Various aspects of the multifaceted relations between the Muscovite state, the Golden Horde, and other Mongol state formations have been fruitfully studied by a number of foreign and Ukrainian scholars. In particular, the works of such historians as Frankopan (Frankopan, 2016), Grousset (Grousset, 1939), Halperin (Halperin, 1987), Foltz (Foltz, 2010), Hopkirk (Hopkirk, 1990), and Ostrowski (Ostrowski, 1998) can be highlighted.

The present body of interviews and expert testimonies constitutes a critical source base for examining the historical trajectory of military conflicts between the Muscovite state and the various Eurasian peoples whose polities emerged from the remnants of the Golden Horde namely, the Kazan Tatars, Chuvash, Mari, and others. Each interlocutor featured in this corpus is a prominent figure within their respective national movements, many of whom have long engaged in intellectual and political advocacy for the preservation of suppressed identities and the self-determination of republics currently under de facto imperial governance by the Russian Federation. These individuals serve not merely as informants but as custodians of historical memory, preserving narratives of collective resistance, military struggle, cultural endurance, and the traumatic legacies of conquest, repression, and assimilation.

Among the most prominent is Rafis Kashapov, a leading activist in the Tatar national movement and a vocal proponent of the political and cultural restoration of the Kazan Khanate. As a historian, Kashapov has produced extensive analyses of Kazan's evolving political status and its militarized encounters with Muscovy. His contributions emphasize the continuity of Tatar resistance and the enduring trauma inflicted by the fall of Kazan in 1552.

Equally significant is the testimony of Chuvash writer and public intellectual I. Ivanov, who provides a nuanced reconstruction of the fifteenth-century Chuvash-Tatar alliance. Ivanov argues that this military-political coalition was underpinned by the civilizational proximity of the two Turkic peoples, and constituted a confederal structure arising from the disintegration of the Golden Horde. According to his assessment, the subsequent Muscovite conquest represented not merely a geopolitical subjugation but a profound disruption of civilizational continuity and ethnic identity.

A comparable interpretation is offered by Mari scholar and national activist V. Tanakov. He asserts that the Mari people were active participants in the anti-Muscovite alliance and played a pivotal military role in the defense of Kazan. Tanakov frames the fall of the Kazan Khanate as a civilizational defeat with long-term deleterious consequences for the Mari and other Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples of the Volga-Ural region.

The inclusion of these testimonies facilitates the reconstruction of a counter-hegemonic historiography one that foregrounds the voices and perspectives of the conquered. For centuries, the historical narrative surrounding the Muscovite conquest of the Kazan Khanate and related successor states has been dominated by a Russocentric imperial discourse (Christian, 2017). This study contributes to redressing that imbalance by incorporating indigenous historical consciousness as a valid epistemological framework.

Furthermore, the analysis engages with the scholarship of Ukrainian historian Serhii Hromenko, one of the foremost experts on the Crimean Khanate. Hromenko critically dismantles the prevailing Soviet and post-Soviet stereotype of the Crimean Tatars as a predatory, nomadic people whose economy was allegedly based on raids against Muscovy and Ukrainian territories. Instead, he presents the Khanate as a politically sophisticated and economically developed state, frequently superior in its administrative and military capacities to its Muscovite adversary. Hromenko's detailed treatment of the 1571 Crimean campaign against Moscow, culminating in the burning of the Russian capital, reinterprets the event as a strategic act of retribution for the earlier destruction of

Kazan and as an assertion of broader Turkic solidarity.

METHOD

The study employs a historical and sociopolitical analysis of primary sources, including archival documents and firsthand accounts. It contextualizes these sources within broader regional and geopolitical dynamics. The authors chose a descriptive research design that allowed to establish the chronology, content and consequences of the wars for the Legacy of the Golden Horde in Eurasia in the 15th–16th centuries. At the same time, elements of qualitative design (interview) were used to collect data from representatives of displaced indigenous peoples to obtain specific examples and reveal the problem through the vision of individual participants in the events or their relatives. Moreover, interview elements were used to collect data from representatives of indigenous peoples to reveal their vision of the history of the conquest of their historical homeland by the Moscow Kingdom during the period under study.

Among the main historical research methods, the typological, comparative and systematic ones were used. Based on the application of content analysis, a detailed investigation of recent studies by Ukrainian and foreign researchers was carried out. The historical-comparative method was used to review some generally accepted views on the peculiarities of interpreting and studying events of the past related to the wars of the Moscow Kingdom against the Kazan Khanate and the Crimean Khanate. All these stages allowed us to create an objective picture of the course and consequences of the events under study in order to guarantee the quality of the research results.

The empirical material gathered in this study, complemented by recent historiographical contributions, seems sufficient to substantiate a reassessment of Muscovite expansionism through the lens of postcolonial theory. This theoretical framework allows for a critical interrogation of the long-term consequences of imperial conquest on ethnic identity, cultural continuity, and historical memory. It further elucidates how the structural mechanisms through which Muscovy and its successor, the Russian Empire reshaped the ethno-political map of Eurasia, marginalizing the agency of indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, this research adopts an integrative methodological approach that combines oral histories, national historiographies, and postcolonial critique to challenge dominant Russian narratives and to re-center the historical agency of subaltern communities. By doing so, it contributes to the ongoing scholarly project of decolonizing the history of the Golden Horde's succession and the imperial legacy that followed.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The 15th century was fateful for the weakening Mongol-Tatar state of the Golden Horde (Ulus Juchi). It was during this period that key territories began to break away from it, including the Kazan Khanate (1437), the Crimean Khanate (1449), and Muscovy (1480).

However, the post-Mongol regional order in the area did not end with the creation of independent states. For almost a hundred years, armed conflicts unfolded over the "Golden Horde legacy" in that part of Eurasia where the Ulus Juchi had once existed. Moscow became the initiator of this struggle, proclaiming itself the political heir of several key states, including Kyivan Rus, Byzantium, and the already mentioned Golden Horde (Mações, 2018).

While the Moscow Rurikids' claims on the former Kyivan Rus principalities led to a long military conflict with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the main competitors for the Golden Horde's legacy were the strong and influential Kazan and Crimean Khanates.

It is worth noting that the reasons, periodization, and historical outcomes of the aforementioned military conflicts have been shaped by Russian ideological stereotypes, reflecting the long-standing competitive coexistence of Muscovy with the aforementioned Tatar communities. Russian historians tend to associate the development of statehood among the Kazan Tatars, as well as the neighboring Eurasian peoples – Udmurts, Chuvash, Bashkirs – with the Mongols, referring to states such as the Crimean or Kazan Khanates as remnants of the Golden Horde (Neumann & Wigen, 2015; Pines et al., 2021).

On the other hand, local historians and civil activists tend to "extend" the history of their statehood to the pre-Mongol period, all the way back to the time known in Europe as the "Great Migration of Peoples". For example, Rafis Kashapov considers the Volga Bulgars as the ancestors of the Kazan Tatars, believing that their early medieval state formation was very powerful. After a brief collapse due to the Mongol invasion, this state was revived in the form of the Kazan Khanate, absorbing both Volga Bulgar and Mongol-Tatar traditions (Prokhvesora, 2023).

Rafis Kashapov views the existence of this state as "a beautiful moment for both the Tatars and other Volga peoples – Udmurts, Chuvash, Mari, Bashkirs, Erzya, and Moksha" (Prokhvesora, 2023).

While relations between these peoples were mostly peaceful, dialog with neighboring East Slavic peoples was

much more difficult. Since peoples such as the Chuvash or Kazan Tatars trace their ethnogenesis back to the Huns, it is likely that some cultural exchanges occurred in the early Middle Ages, in the 4th-5th centuries. Later, with the development of international trade routes along the Dnieper and Volga rivers, contacts became more systematic. This is noted, in particular, by the national figure from Chuvashia, Ille Ivanov, who considers the Volga Bulgars to be the ethnic ancestors of the Chuvash, with whom Kyivan Rus had long and multifaceted relations. Periods of wars and conflicts alternated with periods of trade and peace. One of the first full peace treaties between Kyivan Rus and the Bulgars dates back to the reign of Prince Vladimir the Great in 985. "The Bulgars from Kyivan Rus preferred peace and neighborly, mutually beneficial cooperation, rather than war", Ivanov noted (Prokhvesora, 2022a).

Later, in the first half of the 13th century, Volga Bulgaria came under the rule of the Golden Horde, and about a century later, the Kazan Khanate. Since the Grand Duchy of Moscow was a geopolitical rival of the latter, Moscow's forces periodically launched campaigns against these territories, culminating in the capture of Kazan in 1552. Ille Ivanov observes that it was precisely in the struggle against the Kazan Tatars and Chuvash-Bulgars that one of the ideological pillars of the future Russian Empire was formed (Prokhvesora, 2022c).

At one point, for political reasons, the Golden Horde adopted Islam. Meanwhile, it was the Muslim Turks who captured the Orthodox capital, Constantinople, in 1453. Moscow, which had unilaterally taken on the mission of being the "third Orthodox Rome", was, in the view of Chuvash intellectuals, "avenging" the destruction of the "second Rome" by the Muslim Turks. The capture of Kazan was seen by Moscow as delayed revenge for the fall of Constantinople (Laruelle et al., 2017).

Indeed, the conflict between Muscovy and Kazan was principled, historically conditioned, and likely very brutal. As Ille Ivanov pointed out, while Muscovy in the West was dividing the legacy of Kyivan Rus with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in the East, in its conflict with Kazan, the Kremlin sought to claim the legacy of the Golden Horde. The series of wars with the Kazan Tatars and their allies had important strategic and historical significance. Essentially, it was a question of who would control a significant portion of the Eurasian continent (Prokhvesora, 2022c).

The war between Muscovy and Kazan was protracted. Kazan's capital, as noted by Mari shaman and public figure Vitaly Tanakov, was captured by the Muscovites eight times. However, Tanakov explains that Muscovy did not deploy a regular army, but rather "bandit formations" of brutal robbers and plunderers (Prokhvesora, 2022d).

The Mari people, who became allies of the Kazan Tatars in the fight against Moscow's expansion, held their defense steadfastly. Vitaly Tanakov recalls the dramatic circumstances of the seventh siege of Kazan, when the Mari played a key role in its defense (Prokhvesora, 2022d).

According to V. Tanakov, the invaders brought artillery for the first time, "our region heard cannon fire for the first time". With the help of cannons, the Muscovites completely destroyed the massive gates of the Kazan fortress. The local khan and his army fled in fear, leaving behind children, the elderly, and parts of the Mari army that decided to stand until the end. Fortunately, heavy rain began, which silenced the Muscovite artillery. The Mari warriors launched a sortie, pushing the enemy back and capturing all the cannons as trophies. The "bandit formations" were forced to lift the siege. Soon after, the Kazan khan returned, only to be hanged (Prokhvesora, 2022d).

By expanding Moscow's territory, Ivan the Terrible took the titles "Tsar of Kazan" and "Tsar of Astrakhan", bolstering his claim to be the church's defender. Muscovy's southeastern advance was motivated by more than just a Crusader's religious duty. Kazan was weakened, representing the remains of a force that had conquered and destroyed the Kievan State. The removal of the khanate expanded Russian dominance over the Volga and its outflows to the Caspian Sea (Bedeski, 2017).

Vitaly Tanakov believes that the Mari's resilience was due to their political system, which was fundamentally democratic. This contrasted with the hierarchical structure of the Kazan Khanate, where, after the cowardly khan fled, the entire army followed suit (Prokhvesora, 2022d).

By the mid-16th century, the initiative in this conflict was on the side of the Moscow tsars, who could install their puppets in Kazan. After the death of Khan Safa-Giray in 1549, Moscow demanded that the Tatars hand over the underage heir to the Kazan throne, Utyamish-Giray, and his mother, Syuyumbike. Weak Kazan had no choice but to agree. The local population recognized the authority of Moscow's appointed ruler, Shah Ali, who surrendered the "mountainous" part of the state on the right bank of the Volga to Moscow. Muscovites built the strategically important fortress of Sviyazhsk on the newly annexed lands, marking the starting point of their further expansion.

Soon, Ivan the Terrible decided to deal with his main geopolitical rival in Eurasia once and for all. The tsar intended to abolish Kazan's formal independence and appoint Russian governors. In response, the Tatars finally expelled Moscow's puppet Shah-Ali and prepared for a decisive defense.

However, on October 2, 1552, the Kazan Khanate ceased to exist. The glorious history of the great state was interrupted, sparking a storm of indignation among other peoples historically and ethnically connected to the

Kazan Khanate.

However, the position of Muscovy's rival for the political legacy of the Golden Horde remained unoccupied for long. Soon, the Crimean Khanate, led by the Giray dynasty, actively contested it. In 1569, a combined Turkish-Tatar army first marched on Astrakhan, but this campaign failed for various reasons.

Despite this setback, the Crimean khan Devlet-Giray did not lose his resolve. In January 1570, he demanded from Ivan the Terrible that Muscovy recognize Crimean suzerainty and pay tribute, including 1,000 rubles, furs, and falcons. Additionally, he wanted Kazan and Astrakhan to fall under the control of Bakhchisarai.

The Moscow tsar, emboldened by his previous victories, refused. In response, in 1571, Devlet-Giray mobilized around 40,000 troops from the Crimean and Nogai Tatar forces and launched a brilliant campaign on Moscow, attacking the flank of the Muscovite army. The shock of the Crimean breakthrough was so great that Ivan the Terrible, along with a significant part of his army, hastily fled to Rostov. The Crimeans nearly completely burned Moscow. As Ukrainian historian Serhiy Hromenko notes, the fire, fueled by strong winds, became a firestorm that lasted from six hours to three days (Hromenko, 2015).

The Kremlin's stone walls and the Kitai-gorod withstood for some time, but soon the fire reached their gunpowder stores, which exploded, causing great destruction. The explosion was fatal for Moscow's aristocracy, many of whom suffocated from the thick smoke inside the fortress. Many, trying to escape the heat, hid in the Kremlin's basements, where they died from the pervasive carbon monoxide. The defender of Moscow, Prince Belsky, also perished.

S. Hromenko estimates that around 60,000 Muscovites perished in the sack of the city (Hromenko, 2015).

After the devastation, Ivan the Terrible returned to Moscow and ordered the bodies to be thrown into the Moskva River. The resulting pile of corpses caused an epidemic and more casualties.

Devlet-Giray, after looting Moscow, wrote a letter to Ivan, demanding that the Volga region be cleared and that Kazan and Astrakhan regain their independence. The Crimean Khan mocked Ivan's cowardice and even offered him a dagger to cut his own throat. Afterward, the envoy was kicked out of the Kremlin without a response.

After a brief moment of anger, Ivan declared that he was willing to give up Astrakhan. He was able to drag the negotiations with Bakhchisarai out, during which he temporarily moved his headquarters to Novgorod.

Soon, however, Moscow's expansion in Eurasia continued. After the fall of Kazan, Muscovite authorities carried out a series of punitive actions against the Khanate's population. Forced Christianization began, accompanied by the destruction of mosques, the felling of sacred groves, and the destruction of pagan temples. In this context, it is interesting to address Bedeski' (2017) opinion. According to him, the Mongols were not only a powerful enemy but also a powerful example for the new state when Moscow took Sarai's position as the seat of power. The Mongols gained people and areas after the Kievan State was destroyed. The creation of the Pax Mongolica over Russian territory brought in a new form of sovereignty that was upheld by fear, a sense of divine retribution, and an increase in both population and wealth. There were tangible advantages to replacing Kievan fragmentation with unitary rule, which also provided a model for political order by creating a more centralized state.

Tatar villages along the Volga were burned, and their inhabitants were forced farther from the riverbanks and communications. Russian colonists gradually settled in their place.

Other indigenous peoples allied with Kazan, including the Tatars, Mari, and Chuvash, also faced persecution. For instance, they were prohibited from any metalworking, including making weapons and even jewelry. This prohibition lasted until the 19th century, and cases of local blacksmiths being executed for illegally shoeing horses occurred.

The persecution of the Kazan Tatars was ongoing and systematic. Rafis Kashapov argues that it amounted to a deliberate genocide. "Moscow conquered us 470 years ago, and since then, a large-scale genocide has been underway", he claimed. "In the 16th century, there were approximately equal numbers of Kazan Tatars and Russians. Today, however, the Kazan Tatar population is around seven million, while the Russian population is 90-100 million. This disparity is due to genocide", the activist said (Prokhvesora, 2023).

During this period, to avoid further ruin, some Chuvash leaders were forced to accept the nominal authority of Moscow's tsars.

Thus, from the 15th to the 17th centuries, the nature of relations between the Eurasian peoples and the Muscovite state significantly changed. Most of these peoples, due to various historical circumstances, chose the role of vassals to the Moscow tsars, whose power gradually grew.

CONCLUSION

Russian historiographical narratives portraying the wars between Moscow and the Tatar states as a clash of civilization against barbarism are fundamentally flawed. These conflicts were driven by Moscow's imperialist ambitions, rooted in the ideology of the Rurik dynasty. The wars against the Kazan and Crimean Khanates were

characterized by xenophobia and religious hostility, exacerbated by the geopolitical consequences of the fall of Constantinople.

The historical parallels between Moscow's 15th–16th-century expansionism and its modern policies in Ukraine illustrate the enduring influence of imperialist traditions. Recognizing these continuities is essential for understanding and addressing the current geopolitical landscape.

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