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**The Influence of Military Defensive Factor on the Process  
of Establishing Russia's Southern Frontier in the XVI–XIX Centuries**

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**Abstract:** The authors examine the evolution of the main ideas and concepts explaining the territorial expansion of the Russian state and analyzes their applicability to substantiating the advancement of the borders of the Russian state southward in historical retrospect of the XVI–XIX centuries. Based on the concept of natural boundaries and the theory of the frontier, the main stages of by the Russian state in establishing its southern border are analyzed within the text. It is noted that at all stages of its statehood, in fact, Russia adhered to the defensive doctrine of foreign policy, and the process of expanding the territory southward was associated with the consistent construction of defensive lines. By the XVI–XVII centuries with the help of those defensive lines, the Russian state claimed its rights to these lands as the legal successor of Kievan Rus. The feature of the following centuries was the construction of fortified lines to protect the borders established as a result of ongoing warfare, and their construction was enshrined in international treaties. The process of Russia's movement southward was completed upon reaching the natural boundaries of the Black Sea coast, which made it possible to ensure the safety of the territories and the population of the southern frontier.

**Keywords:** natural borders, frontier, defensive line, serving people, boyar scions, Cossacks, land militia


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**Влияние военно-оборонительного фактора  
на продвижение южного фронта России в XVI–XIX вв.**

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**Аннотация:** Рассмотрена эволюция основных идей и концепций, объясняющих территориальное расширение государства, проанализирована их применимость к обоснованию продвижения границ Российского государства на южном направлении в исторической ретроспективе XVI–XIX вв. На основе концепции естественных границ и теории фронта исследованы основ-

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ные этапы установления южной границы России. Отмечается, что Россия на всех этапах своей государственности, по сути, придерживалась оборонительной доктрины внешней политики, а процесс расширения ее территории на южном направлении был связан с последовательным строительством оборонительных линий. На первом этапе в XVI–XVII вв. с их помощью Русское государство заявляло свои права на эти земли как правопреемник Киевской Руси. Особенностью последующих столетий стало возведение укрепленных линий для защиты границ, установленных по итогам войн и закрепленных международными договорами. Процесс движения России на юг завершился по достижению естественных границ Черноморского побережья, что позволило обеспечить безопасность территорий и населения.

**Ключевые слова:** естественные границы, фронтир, оборонительная линия, служилые люди, дети боярские, казачество, ландмилиция

**Вклад авторов:** Все авторы внесли равный вклад в исследование и написание статьи, ознакомились с окончательным текстом и несут равную ответственность.

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## Introduction

*Relevance.* External threats from the Crimean Khanate in the XVI–XVII centuries contributed to the development of an intricate state policy to protect the southern borders of the Russian state. This policy was implemented in the consistent development of the territories south of the Oka River through military colonization. Through this process a so-called “Field” developed – a vast uninhabited forest-steppe and steppe zones with no clear boundaries, adjoining the marginal towns of the Russian state from the south. Both Moscow (as the successor to Kievan Rus) and the Crimean Khanate laid claim to the territories of this buffer zone, which separated the Russian and Golden Horde lands. Over time the geographic boundaries of the Field changed; whereas in the first half of the XVI century the Field began immediately behind Tula, then as Russian towns were built there in the second half of the XVI century, its border moved south<sup>1</sup>.

The concept of the “southern frontier” of Russia in the geographical sense has different content depending on the era. Whereas in the XVI–XVII centuries it moved along the territory of the Field, then in the XVIII–XIX centuries it concerned the lands of the Northern Black Sea region, the Azov region, Novorossiia, and Crimea. In this regard, it seems particularly relevant to study this problem in consideration of modern conditions. This is primarily due to the fact that at the moment Russia is defending, among other things, the security of its southern borders, not only on the fronts of the Special Military Operation, but also in terms of information warfare. It is quite logical at this juncture to turn to historical aspects that explain the specifics of the formation of the southern frontier of Russia, and the establishment of the country's borders in the conditions of the XVI–XIX centuries.

*Elaboration of the problem.* In historical science, there are several concepts, the use of which allows us to substantiate from different angles the logic of expanding the territorial borders of the state. First of all, this matter concerns the concept of natural borders and of the frontier theory, which are discussed in this article.

*The purpose of the study* is to reconstruct and understand the process of territorial expansion of the Russian state throughout the XVI–XIX centuries through the prism of the concept of natural borders and frontier theory.

<sup>1</sup> V.P. Zagorovsky, *Istoriia vkhozhdeniia Tsentralnogo Chernozemya v sostav Rossiiskogo gosudarstva v XVI veke* [History of the entry of the Central Black Earth Region into the Russian state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Voronezh: Voronezh University Publ., 1991).

*The source base* of the study is regulatory documents and documents of management and record keeping published and stored in the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents, including imperial edicts, imperial reports, instructions, etc.

### **Concept of natural boundaries: origin and evolution**

The concept of natural boundaries originated in the XVII century in France during its confrontation with the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. It is Cardinal Richelieu who can be considered the author of the concept. The key elements in the concept of natural boundaries are the geographical terrain – seas, rivers and mountains, which are considered as natural constraints of a state's territorial expansion.

In Russian historiography, the scientific substantiation of the theory of natural boundaries was initiated by V.O. Klyuchevsky and S.M. Soloviev.

Soloviev used this category with regard to the definition of the natural boundaries of individual principalities (Novgorod, Kiev, Smolensk, etc.), implying by natural boundaries that: specific rivers, lakes, as well as watersheds between river systems, especially portages, which according to historians in Russia, partly replaced mountains, as such boundaries in historic Russia, all played a protective role historically in what would become Russian lands<sup>2</sup>.

V.O. Klyuchevsky examined the process of expansion of the territory of the entire Russian state in order to achieve its natural ethnographic and geographic boundaries, noting the dissimilarity of geographic conditions and historical environments in different directions of movement. Klyuchevsky came to the conclusion that at the beginning of the XIX century the Russian state “found itself within its natural boundaries.”<sup>3</sup>

Subsequently, the concept of natural boundaries was reflected in European geopolitical theories of the first half of the XX century. Thus, in his work “Anthropogeography” F. Ratzel, a representative of the German school, the “father of geopolitics” connects geographic and political factors and substantiates the thesis that the growth of a state organism continues up to its natural boundaries. K. Haushofer believed that these boundaries can be mobile depending on the level of a state's development and its ambitions. At the same time, the concept of natural boundaries was criticized by the French school through J. Ansel, who understood these boundaries as the result of balance of the vitality of two peoples, rather than as physical obstacles separating them<sup>4</sup>.

British geopolitician H.J. Mackinder analyzed the natural and geographical factors from a different angle. He examined the historical confrontation between the peoples of the “Heartland” (the territory of northeastern Eurasia) and the surrounding powers of the “Inner Crescent” (the countries of Europe, Southwest Asia, North Africa, India and China), as a result of which the former were gradually pushing the latter to the periphery.

The problem of the establishment of Russia's borders was also analyzed from the point of view of the concept of natural boundaries. Thus, when substantiating the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire, contemporary Anglo-American authors F. Bergholz, J. LeDonne, J. Richards, in one way or another turned to this concept, although the boundaries of the Heartland were defined by researchers differently, and in general

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<sup>2</sup> S.M. Soloviev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen: Kniga 1* [History of Russia from Ancient Times: Book 1] (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaya polza Publ., 1857–1864).

<sup>3</sup> V.O. Klyuchevsky, *Kurs russkoi istorii* [Course of Russian History]. Vol. 5 of *Sochineniia* [Works] (Moscow: Mysl Publ., 1989).

<sup>4</sup> N.A. Baranov, “Klassicheskie geopoliticheskie teorii evropeyskikh nauchnykh shkol: germanskoy, frantsuzskoy, ital'yanskoy [Classical geopolitical theories of European scientific schools: German, French, Italian],” in *Personalny sait Nikolaya Baranova*, accessed 17 February, 2016, [https://www.nicbar.ru/politology/study/kurs\\_geopoliticheskie-problemy-evropejskogo-razvitiya/269-tema-5-klassicheskie-geopoliticheskie-teorii-evropeyskikh-nauchnykh-shkol-germanskoy-frantsuzskoy-ital'yanskoy](https://www.nicbar.ru/politology/study/kurs_geopoliticheskie-problemy-evropejskogo-razvitiya/269-tema-5-klassicheskie-geopoliticheskie-teorii-evropeyskikh-nauchnykh-shkol-germanskoy-frantsuzskoy-ital'yanskoy)

they designated the territory which approximately coincided with the borders of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Another concept used in modern Western historiography to explain the expansion of the borders of the Russian Empire as a response to external threats, especially in the areas where the ultimately established borders did not fully correspond to the geographical features, is the “optimum of conquest” introduced by American orientalist O. Lattimore with regard to the history of China's expansion<sup>5</sup>.

Contemporary Russian researchers I.V. Bakhlov, B.M. Pugachev, R.A. Tleptsok place a new emphasis, highlighting the integral role of the Russian ethnic group in the synthesis of the new Eurasian culture and the economic development of its uninhabited territories. The relevance of further development of conceptual approaches to understanding the phenomenon of Russia's natural boundaries within the framework of the development of Eurasian geopolitical theories, as well as for formulating regional priorities in public administration remains a noteworthy phenomenon<sup>6</sup>.

### Frontier theory

In the context of studying the problems of the establishment of state borders in different historical eras, frontier theory developed. This concept was put forward by American historian F. Turner in 1893. He argued that the American frontier was a border strip of free lands, which was gradually developed by white settlers and moved deeper into the continent westward until the borders of the state reached the Pacific coast. According to the historian, the American frontier was “a place of contact between savagery and civilization,” which distinguished it from the European one, which was “fortified border lines passing through densely populated areas.” According to F. Turner, the special living conditions in the frontier territories played a key role in the formation of the American character, the emergence of the ideals of freedom and democracy<sup>7</sup>.

In the 1920–1940s, the frontier theory was seriously criticized. C. Beard and B. Wright questioned the decisive role of the frontier in the development of American civilization and democracy; K. Goodrich and S. Davinson questioned its influence on the pace of industrialization and urbanization. In the following decades, the frontier theory changed significantly. In modern Western historical science, Turner's frontier theory was considered outdated and its irrelevance to modern science largely prevailed. Thus, in the monograph “Legacy of Conquest” (1987) P. Limerick suggests moving away from a simplified and one-sided approach (only from the point of view of American civilization) in favor of incorporating global history and to replace the concept of frontier expansion with that of “conquest.”<sup>8</sup>

In Soviet historiography, from the second half of the 1950s, Turner's frontier concept was in general criticized in the works of A.V. Efimov, N.N. Bolkhovitinov, and I.P. Dementyev. Despite this, in the 1990s this term was adopted by Russian historians

<sup>5</sup> I.A. Popov, “Natural borders as a factor of Russian colonization in modern Anglo-American historiography,” *Young Scientist*, no. 19 (2015): 663–664.

<sup>6</sup> I.V. Bakhlov, “Prostranstvennoe razvitiye Rossiiskoi imperii: kontseptsia «yestestvennykh granits [Spatial development of the Russian Empire: the concept of ‘natural borders’],” in *Gosudarstvennaia vlast i upravleniye: problemy i perspektivy: materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, Saransk, Sredne-Volzhskii institut (filial) VGUYU (RPA Minyusta Rossii), 16 fevralya 2018 g.* (Saransk: YurExPraktik Publ., 2018), 29; R.A. Tleptsok, “Problema estestvenno-geograficheskikh granits Rossiiskoi imperii: kontseptual'nye podkhody [The problem of natural-geographical borders of the Russian Empire: conceptual approaches],” *Nauchnaya mysl' Kavkaza*, no. 2 (2011): 22.

<sup>7</sup> F.J. Turner, *Frontir v amerikanskoi istorii* [The Frontier in American History] (Moscow: Ves mir Publ., 2009).

<sup>8</sup> A.A. Tsyganova, “The creative legacy of F.J. Turner in the history of American progressivism,” PhD diss., MPG, 2012.

and introduced into scientific use in a slightly modified form initially when considering the history of the development of Siberia. Two main approaches to the interpretation of the frontier in Russian science can be distinguished. Within the first approach, the frontier is understood in territorial terms as a line of fortifications or a border including an implicitly expressed one) with the indigenous population (A.D. Ageyev, R.N. Rakhimov). Within the framework of the second approach, attention is focused on the special social conditions in the frontier area, and the frontier is considered as a meeting place of different cultures, an area of interaction between civilizations at different levels of development (N.Yu. Zamyatina, D.Ya. Rezun, M.V. Shilovsky)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, applying the frontier theory to a qualitatively different environment with special economic and political conditions, A.D. Ageyev highlights such features of the settlement of Siberia by the forced nature of its colonization, as well as the absence of its subsequent integration into world economic ties (it remained in the periphery of the center).

As for the study of the southern borderland, this area is being explored by Belgorod, Voronezh and Tambov scientists. A.I. Papkov, O.V. Skobelkin and Yu.A. Mizis suggested using the term “frontier” to describe the development of the region in question, since the terms “borderland,” “border uyezds” and others, in common use among historians, do not reflect the specific features of the region, except for its proximity to the border. Instead, they formulated the main components of this concept regarding the southern region and identified its essential features<sup>10</sup>. A.I. Papkov also expressed the idea of using the historical term “ukraina” in the studies of this region, which was widely used in the documents of the XVI–XVII centuries in relation to its use to mean the outskirts of both the Russian state and the Polish – Lithuanian lands<sup>11</sup>.

Nevertheless, the validity of using the new term in Russian historiography still causes controversy. Given this fact, in 2020, famous historian of the Cossacks D.V. Sen published an article in which he raised the issue of the prospects for applying the frontier concept in historical research<sup>12</sup>. It resulted in the discussion “How to study frontiers today?” within an issue of the “Petersburg Slavic and Balkan Studies” journal; the framework of which was proposed was to consider the frontier as “a zone of communication and complementary economic, social, cultural and political interaction between societies with different specifics.” Summing up the discussion, D.V. Sen notes that the use of the frontier concept opens opportunities for new research results in this area<sup>13</sup>. Currently, the main platform for discussing the issues of frontier theory, Russia’s historical border zone and borderlands, intercultural communication in contact zones is the “Journal of Frontier Studies.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A.S. Khromykh, “K voprosu o primeneniі poniatii ‘kolonizatsiia’ i ‘frontir’ v izuchenii istorii Sibiri [On the application of the concepts of ‘colonization’ and ‘frontier’ in the study of the history of Siberia],” in *Istoricheskie issledovaniia v Sibiri: Problemy i perspektivy. Sbornik materialov III regionalnoi molodezhnoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Novosibirsk: Institute of History SB RAS Publ., 2009), 108–113.

<sup>10</sup> Yu.A. Mizis, O.V. Skobelkin, and A.I. Papkov, “Russian Frontier: Political, Social and Economic Aspects (South of Russia in the 16<sup>th</sup> – late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries),” *Tambov University Review* 20, no. 10 (2015): 7–15.

<sup>11</sup> A.I. Papkov, “‘Frontier’ or ‘Ukraina’: Two Approaches to the Study of the History of Russian Colonization of the Dnieper-Don Forest-Steppe in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” *Rus, Russia. Middle Ages and Modern Times*, no. 5 (2017): 176–180.

<sup>12</sup> D.V. Sen, “Frontier Research in Present-Day Russia: Shaky Boundaries of the Academic Dialogue,” *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, no. 1 (2020): 66–80.

<sup>13</sup> “Kak segodnya izuchat’ frontiry? Diskussiya po stat’ye D.V. Senia [How today to study the Frontier? Discussion on the article by D.V. Sen],” *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, no. 1 (2020): 96, 98–100.

<sup>14</sup> For further reading, accessed February 17, 2024, <https://jfs.today/index.php/jfs/about/editorialTeam>

## Military aspects of the defense of Russia's southern outskirts

In the course of the establishment of the Russian centralized state in the XIV–XVI centuries, measures to defend its southern borders were enhanced. For the Moscow Principality, the natural border protecting it from the south was the Oka river. At the end of the XIV century, there were two fortresses there – Kolomna and Serpukhov, on the basis of which operated as a reconnaissance and warning system for attacks by the Horde, and by the middle of the XV century, a service to the Grand Duke for the defense of the Oka borders was established, known as the “coastal service” or “Bereg.” In 1480, other fortresses were included in it – Peremyshl, Kaluga, Aleksin, Tarusa, Kashira, and the Oka bank was fortified with two palisades, the space between which was filled with earth. Thus, a unified defense system was established along the entire course of the Oka from Kolomna to the mouth of the Ugra<sup>15</sup>.

At the turn of the XVI century, as the Upper Oka Principalities and Ryazan lands were annexed, and the task of protecting the new borders became a priority. Under Vasily III, stone fortresses were built – the Kolomna, Tula and Zaraysk fortresses; at the approaches to Tula, abatises (barrier strips of fallen timber) were built – the basis of the future abatis line<sup>16</sup>. This project for the construction of a single defensive line in the south began to become a nationwide one in the 1550s, after the annexation of Kazan and then Astrakhan, which neutralized external threats in the eastern and southeastern directions. At the first stage of the construction of the abatis line the Tula military governor brought in more than a thousand people with carpentry tools and horses from different areas. By the beginning of the 1570s, the abatis line stretched from Kaluga and the Kozelsk forests to Ryazan<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, there appeared the first regulation of the border service – the Boyars' decree on the stanitsa and guard service of 1571, and the Russian state introduced the practice of securing new territories by applying special marks on trees to indicate the border of Russia<sup>18</sup>.

Thus, the expansion of the state territory beyond its natural geographic boundary (in this case, the Oka River) required the construction of artificial barriers in the form of defensive lines. The first step in advancing in the Field was the construction of the Great Abatis Line, as a result of which the border was moved forward 50-60 km south of the Oka.

Simultaneously with the construction of the Abatis Line, active development of the Field began. In the 1550s, the towns (fortresses) of Dedilov, Bolkhov, Ryazhsk, in the 1560–1570s – Dankov, Orel, Epifan; Venev was reconstructed, in the 1580s Voronezh and Livny, were created, and in the 1590s – Yelets, Kromy, Belgorod, Kursk, Oskol, Valuyki, Tsarev-Borisov were built.

The territory of the sparsely populated Field, gradually developed during the military colonization in the XVI century, is considered by Russian historians as a frontier due to a number of features (whether it belonging to the state was not clearly defined, there was no border demarcation, there is a constant movement of the conventional

<sup>15</sup> K.S. Nosov, *Russkii srednevekovye kreposti* [Russian medieval fortresses] (Moscow: EKSMO Publ., 2013).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>17</sup> I.G. Burtsev, and A.V. Deduk, “K voprosu o termine ‘zasechnaya cherta’ i geograficheskikh ramkakh yego upotrebleniia (nekotoryye zamechaniia i nabliudeniia) [On the issue of the term ‘zasechnaya cherta’ and the geographical scope of its use (some comments and observations)],” in *Belgorodskaya cherta: sbornik statei i materialov po istorii Belgorodskoi oboronitelnoi cherty* (Belgorod: Constanta Publ., 2020), 16.

<sup>18</sup> Yu.A. Mizis, and A.I. Papkov, “Russia's external and internal borders and the natural areas in the South from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century,” *Russian History*, no. 3 (2016): 41.

border, etc.)<sup>19</sup>. The territories annexed by the Russian state in the XVI century were mostly former possessions of Kievan Rus, and over three centuries ago, had belonged to the Chernigov principality. Therefore, at this stage in the frontier zone, there was no so-called clash of civilizations (with the exception of regular Tatar raids), and there was no interpenetration of different cultures. The Russian frontier differed from the European one, which was characterized by high population density on both sides of the borders.

During that period, the expansion of the Russian state did not cause concern of the Crimean Khanate, since new towns that were built were far from traditional Tatar nomad camps, and therefore the issue of borders was not raised in official correspondence. At the beginning of the XVII century, the issues of disputed territories became more acute. But whereas in the western direction after the Smolensk War in 1634–1638, the lands and part of the borders between Russia and the Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth were demarcated, but in the southern direction such actions were not taken<sup>20</sup>.

At the same time, the Tatar devastating raids during the Smolensk War showed the weakness of the defenses on the southern borders, so in 1635 a decision was made to build a new defensive line in the south, which later became known as the Belgorod Line. On the one hand, it strengthened the defensive potential of the region, and on the other hand, it became the next step in advancing deeper into the Field (up to 300–400 km southward) and the development of an actual fortification of the new borders.

The construction of the Belgorod Line became a large-scale state project that lasted for more than two decades, during which more than 20 fortified towns were built; defensive structures of 800 km long were made from the Vorskla river in the west to the Chelnovaya river in the east.

The Belgorod Line the construction of which was completed before the start of the Russo-Polish War of 1654–1667 proved to be an effective way to prevent Tatar raids and became a new center of attraction and migration of the population. Belgorod became the administrative center of the line. At the same time, for a while, the role of the main city was played by Yablonov, built in 1637 on a strategically important place – the Izyum Trail<sup>21</sup>.

Already at the initial stage of the Belgorod Line existence, it acquired the status of the state border. Thus, in a special tsar's decree of 1647, the local population was prohibited from settling beyond the line<sup>22</sup>. In addition, in the minds of service class people, the line was perceived as the state border, which can be traced in numerous reports of clashes with the Tatars on the line, where, these clashed had stated to occur in order to prevent their invasion “into Rus'.” Thus, describing the battle with the Crimeans in 1637, A. Buturlin, the military governor of the town of Yablonov mentioned that they “had not let the Tatars into Rus'.”<sup>23</sup>

The Belgorod and other defensive lines, as a rule, did not coincide with natural boundaries, namely natural zones (forest-steppe – steppe)<sup>24</sup>, which opened up the possibility for further movement southward. Such a step, which advanced the border by another 150–200 km, was the construction of a new line in 1679–1780, which in Russian historiography was called the Izyum Line. Built at the final stage of the Russo-Turkish War of 1672–1681, it was aimed at protecting partially populated territories beyond the

<sup>19</sup> Yu.A. Mizis, O.V. Skobelkin, and A.I. Papkov, *Russkii frontir*, 11–12.

<sup>20</sup> Yu.A. Mizis, and A.I. Papkov, “Russia's external and internal borders,” 42–46.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 97, 189.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (hence after – RGADA), f. 210, op. 12., d. 96, l. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Yu.A. Mizis, and A.I. Papkov, “Russia's external and internal borders,” 43.

western part of the Belgorod Line from Tatar raids, as well as at strengthening Russia's position in the region, while indicating its rights to the new territories.

Unlike the Belgorod Line, the Izyum Line was mostly located along the banks of nearby rivers, using them as natural barriers (as once was the Coastal Line on the Oka). It seemed to join the Belgorod line, protruding into the steppe at an acute angle, and stretched for 530 km from the town of Userda in the east to the town of Kolomak in the west. After the construction of the Izyum line, the status of Russia's southern borders was officially established in documents for the first time, which was recorded in the Treaty of Bakhchisarai of 1681.

During the reign of Peter I, the border service was reformed; taking into account European military experience, a land militia was created. These were regular and semi-regular military formations from the local population (settled army). The first attempt to recruit for land militia regiments was made in 1713 during the Russo-Turkish War. They were created on a permanent basis in 1723–1725, and in 1730–1731, and the reforms were completed with the total replacement of the regular army in the south with the new militia<sup>25</sup>.

At the same time, in anticipation of another Russo-Turkish war, a decision was made to build a new fortified line on the way to the Northern Black Sea region, 100–150 km south of the Belgorod line. In 1731–1742, the Ukrainian line was built there, which differed from the previous projects as its construction was carried out along the existing political borders. The border began from the southern part of the Izyum line on the Seversky Donets River and stretched to the Dnieper along the Bereka, Berestova and Orel Rivers, which corresponded to the borders with Turkey granted by the Treaty of the Pruth of 1711 (although in 1713 the border was established further south between the Orel and Samara rivers)<sup>26</sup>.

The next line in this direction (the Dnieper defensive line) began to be created in 1770, at the height of the Russo-Turkish War of 1770–1783. It began from the Dnieper and ran along the Konka and Berd rivers to the coast of the Sea of Azov in accordance with the border established in 1740 by the Treaty of Belgrade. Already in 1783, with the annexation of Crimea, the Dnieper line lost its significance, and in 1797 it was abolished as a single defensive complex<sup>27</sup>.

In 1777–1780 in the Caucasus direction, along the new border with the Ottoman Empire, established by the terms of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, Russia built the Azov-Mozdok fortified line, which included the fortresses of Kizlyar and Mozdok, which had been built earlier. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Jassy in 1791, which confirmed the borders along the Kuban River (according to the 1783 manifesto of Catherine II), and the Black Sea cordon and Kuban lines were built along with them in 1792 and 1794 (together with the Mozdok line, they formed the Caucasian line). After gaining access to the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus by the Treaty of Adrianople of 1829, in the 1830s new defensive works were built along the Black Sea coastline.

<sup>25</sup> N.N. Petrukhintsev, “Osnovnyie etapy ‘landmilititskoi’ reformy 1710–1730-kh godov [The Main Stages of the ‘Landmilititsky’ Reform of the 1710s–1730s],” in *Voiennoe proshloe gosudarstva Rossiiskogo: utrachennoe i sokhranennoe: Materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 250-letiiu Dostopamiatnogo zala. 13–17 sentiabria 2006 g. Sektsiia ‘Voiennaia istoriia Rossii: opyt sovremennogo izucheniiia’* (St. Petersburg: Military History Museum of Artillery, Engineering Troops and Signal Corps Publ., 2006), 32–34.

<sup>26</sup> E.A. Gukova, “Defense of the southern borders of Russia in the 18th century: Ukrainian line and Ukrainian Landmilititsky corps (1710–1780),” PhD diss., MosGU, 2009, 65–72.

<sup>27</sup> A.V. Makidonov, *Dneprovskaiia liniia (1770–1797)* [Dnieper line (1770–1797)] (Zaporizhie: Accent Invest-trade Publ., 2014).



## Conclusion

Several factors contributed to the successful implementation of the strategy for the expansion of the territory of the Russian state for over almost four centuries. First of all, this was the constant improvement of the organization of the armed forces and the art of fortification, which was expressed in the construction of defensive lines; in the first two centuries they only marked the border of the frontier, and in the subsequent period they protected the officially established state borders.

In the absence of suitable natural barriers to protect its southern borders, the Russian state was forced to create defensive lines for several centuries, physically marking the borders as the state consistently advanced southward. Moreover, whereas in the XVI–XVII centuries defensive lines were built on territories which the Russian state laid claim to as the successor of Kievan Rus, thus by building these lines declared its rights to these lands, and then from the XVIII century fortified lines were built exclusively along the borders, now fixed by international treaties. At the same time, proper protection from external threats required further advancement southward, which was completed only upon reaching the natural borders - the Black Sea coast, which ensured the security of the territories and their population. Research into frontier territories through the example of Russia's southern borders helps us understand how the process of forming new identities and social statuses took place within these contact zones.

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