



**Foreign policy of Russia
in the eighteenth century:
goals and results of war**

FOREIGN POLICY OF RUSSIA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: GOALS AND RESULTS OF WARS

POLÍTICA EXTERIOR DE RUSIA EN EL SIGLO XVIII: OBJETIVOS Y RESULTADOS DE LAS GUERRAS

ABSTRACT

This problem being discussed is important today because the issue of the results of Russia's foreign policy in the eighteenth century is still debatable in contemporary Russian historiography. This discussion is connected with the preservation in the minds of Russian society of an ambivalent attitude towards the territorial growth of the Russian Empire in this century. A part of the society welcomes this growth, which has allowed Russia to reach the seas. Another part of the society indicates the great human and financial losses that the country has suffered as a result of expansion. A goal of the article is to relate the goals set by the Russian elite to the wars and the results achieved. The leading approach to the study of this problem has become a general scientific method of analysis and synthesis. The article describes the goals that the rulers of Russia set for themselves before the beginning of various wars. It characterizes the results of those wars. It assesses the effectiveness of the wars based on the correlation of the results, which were achieved, with the goals set. It reveals the trends in the development of this effectiveness. The materials of the article can be useful for clarifying the ideas about the foreign policy of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century.

KEY WORDS: Russia, Northern War, the Seven Years' War, sections of Rzeczpospolita, Russian-Turkish wars, "Greek project".

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RESUMEN

Este problema que se discute hoy es importante porque la cuestión de los resultados de la política exterior de Rusia en el siglo XVIII es aún discutible en la historiografía rusa contemporánea. Esta discusión está conectada con la preservación en las mentes de la sociedad rusa de una actitud ambivalente hacia el crecimiento territorial del Imperio ruso en este siglo. Una parte de la sociedad acoge con satisfacción este crecimiento, que ha permitido a Rusia llegar a los mares. Otra parte de la sociedad indica las grandes pérdidas humanas y financieras que el país ha sufrido como resultado de la expansión. Un objetivo del artículo es relacionar los objetivos establecidos por la elite rusa con las guerras y los resultados logrados. El enfoque principal para el estudio de este problema se ha convertido en un método científico general de análisis y síntesis. El artículo describe los objetivos que los gobernantes de Rusia se fijaron antes del comienzo de varias guerras. Caracteriza los resultados de esas guerras. Evalúa la efectividad de las guerras basándose en la correlación de los resultados, que se lograron, con los objetivos establecidos. Revela las tendencias en el desarrollo de esta efectividad. Los materiales del artículo pueden ser útiles para aclarar las ideas sobre la política exterior del Imperio ruso en el siglo XVIII.?

PALABRAS CLAVE: Rusia, Guerra del Norte, Guerra de los Siete Años, secciones de Rzeczpospolita, guerras ruso-turcas, "proyecto griego".

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INTRODUCTION

The history of imperial Russia was full of wars. A special place was occupied by the eighteenth century. In that century Russia conducted the largest number of wars compared to the other centuries of its history. The Russian state had been at war for forty eight years in the eighteenth century.

Russia came to two seas important for trade with Europe - the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. Russia liquidated its Western neighbor, Rzeczpospolita, against which Russia had fought in the 17th century for 23 years. Russia became a full-fledged participant in the European system of international relations, and in some periods played a major role in it. These achievements are undeniable. They are analyzed in detail in the Russian historical studies in which the course of the wars of Russia with its adversaries and diplomatic relations between Russia and the European countries are described. However, most studies lack a generalized view of Russia's military success, combined with the tasks set by the Russian elite before the wars. Meanwhile, a quantitative analysis of the wars of Russia in this aspect would fill a gap in the scientific historical views on the effectiveness of Russia's foreign policy. This article is devoted to the analysis of wars of Russia from this angle of view.

2. METHODS

The system-structural approach has provided an opportunity to characterize comprehensively the research of the contemporary Russian historians in order to identify something common and unique in two aspects. First, to analyze the goals and tasks set before the wars started by the Russian elite.

Second, to compare the achievements of the Russian army summarizing the results of the wars and peace treaties with those plans. The problem-chronological approach has made it possible to divide the analyzed area into a number of specific problems and to characterize them separately, but in interrelation with the other problems. The application of the comparative-historical method has made it possible to compare and collate the goals and outcomes of the various wars.

3. RESULTS

The goals of Russia before the wars can be conditionally divided into small, large and grandiose. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Peter I set a goal to reach the Baltic Sea, but he wanted only to return to the small coastline of the Gulf of Finland, which Russia lost in the treaty of Stolbovo with Sweden in 1618. Peter did not even dream about attaching the entire Baltics at the very beginning of the Northern war with Sweden, and was ready to cede it to Rzeczpospolita and Saxony - the allies of Russia in the war. As Russia progressed in the Northern War, Peter's ambitions grew, and he set a new goal: to acquire the entire southern coast of the Gulf of Finland (Estonia and Ingria) with the large seaports of Narva and Revel. And when the Russian army occupied in 1710 the entire Baltics (including Liflandia with the large port of Riga), Peter already set a goal to consolidate all of it legally behind Russia [N. Pavlenko, 1998]. He succeeded. The result of the Northern War was the consolidation of the Baltics and even parts of the Finnish lands belonging to Sweden (with the fortress of Vyborg) behind Russia. (Xiangyi et al., 2016 and Ling et al., 2016) Thus, the grandiose results achieved by Peter the Great in the Baltic direction far surpassed the originally set small goal. The unexpected result of the Northern War, not planned by Peter in any of the purposes, was the establishment of Russia's protectorate over Rzeczpospolita. According to the decisions of the "mute sejm" Rzeczpospolita's army was reduced to a paltry extent, the Russian army could freely pass through the territory of this state, and Rzeczpospolita itself entered into an alliance with Russia. An opposite example (a grandiose goal and a negative result) was the Prut campaign of Peter I on the Ottoman Empire in 1711. Peter counted on appearance of the Russian troops in the Balkans to raise the Slavic peoples to a liberation struggle against the Ottoman Turks. The ultimate goal

was appearance in the Balkans of the Slavic states independent and friendly towards Russia (Serbia, Bulgaria). Nothing came out of it. The Russian army was surrounded by Turkish troops and barely got out of it at the price of concessions from Peter. Russia gave Turkey the fortress of Azov, which it won in 1696 [N. Pavlenko, 1998]. The balance between the goal and result was the Persian campaign of Peter I in 1722-1723. His goal was to seize the western and southern coast of the Caspian Sea which was achieved. Iran gave Russia the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. However, the economic goal (Mafi et al. 2012) of that campaign – to turn the flow of eastern goods from Asia to the Caspian Sea and send it through Russia to the Baltic Sea, and then to Europe – was not achieved [I. Kuruakin, 2010]. The last goal of Peter which he set in 1723 – to win a seat in the World Ocean with the help of the Baltic Fleet, in order to have colonies too and to rise level with the colonial European powers (Holland, England, France, Spain) – was not achieved due to Peter's death in 1725. The successors of Peter refused such grandiose intentions.

Reign of Anna Ioannovna. At the beginning of her reign, Russia had a problem of keeping Rzeczpospolita under its protectorate, where anti-Russian sentiments grew and the Polish aristocrat Stanislaw Leszczyński was elected without the consent of Russia. Anna set a goal to restore Russian control over Rzeczpospolita. That was achieved following the results of the war for "Polish inheritance" in 1733-1735. Leshchinsky fled from Poland, and with the consent of Russia the Saxon elector August III came to its throne. He confirmed the decisions of the "silent sejm". Rzeczpospolita remained under the protectorate of Russia [I. Kuruakin, 2014]. The goal and the result in that case completely coincided. A big goal and an insignificant, although positive result was the results of the Russian-Turkish war of 1735-1739. The goal was to conquer the Crimea and destruct the Crimean Khanate, as well as get an access to the Black Sea on the vast Crimean coast. Nothing came out of it. During the war the Russian army also entered the Moldavian principality (it was a vassal of the Ottoman Empire). The commander of the Russian army B. Minich had a goal of attachment it to Russia, but this required the consent of Anna Ioannovna, she never gave it. The Russian army left Moldova. According to the Belgrade peace of 1739 with Turkey,

Russia received only the fortress of the Azov without a right to fortify it with fortifications [N. Petrukhintsev, 2014].

Reign of Elizabeth Petrovna. At the beginning of her reign Russia had a problem – Sweden attacked Russia, seeking to take revenge for the defeat in the Northern War and regain at least some part of the lands taken by Russia. As soon as Elizabeth came to power, she set a goal to preserve all the lands in possession of Russia. The goal was slightly overfulfilled. The result of the Russian-Swedish war of 1741-1743 was the treaty of Åbo, according to which Russia seized from Sweden a little more territory in Finland. The border with Sweden was moved away from St. Petersburg to the Kymmene river [F.-D. Liechtenhan, 2007].

The Seven Years' War of 1756-1763. That war is an example, when two goals were set: insignificant and unclear. During the war the Russian leadership changed them into one purpose – a larger one. But in the end Russia achieved absolutely nothing. The goal of reducing Prussia's influence in Europe was unclear, as its King Frederick the Great was leading an unpredictable aggressive policy that could affect the influence of Russia in Rzeczpospolita (Prussia bordered on it). However, the entourage of Elizabeth Petrovna could not determine what exactly it was to decrease that influence. The aim to take the province East Prussia from Prussia and hand it over to Rzeczpospolita was insignificant. And Rzeczpospolita was supposed to hand over its eastern lands to Russia, bordering with Russia – Eastern Belorussia. Already during the war the Russian leadership set a goal to keep East Prussia for itself, since on its territory there was a large port of Königsberg [M.Yu. Anisimov, 2014]. But as a result, Elizabeth Petrovna died without waiting for a victorious peace with Prussia. Coming to power, Peter III, who was a fan of Prussia, returned East Prussia for free. Peter III was overthrown by Catherine II in six months' time, but she decided not to resume the war to return that territory back under the Russian rule, as the Russian budget was undermined by the costly war. As a result, Russia was left with nothing.

Reign of Catherine II. The first war of Catherine was the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1768-1774. Catherine set a goal to achieve an access to the Black Sea. The achieved re-

sults surpassed by far the set goals. According to the treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca of 1774, Russia got a direct access to the Black Sea between the Dnieper and the Southern Bug rivers, but small in length. In addition, Russia received the fortresses Kerch and Yenikale in Crimea, the possession of which allowed the Russian ships to pass freely the Kerch Strait from the Azov Sea to the Black Sea. In addition, the Crimean Khanate was declared independent of the Ottoman Empire, what created prerequisites for its liquidation and attachment of Crimea to Russia. In 1783 that was done [E.K. de Ankoss, 2002]. The Russian army entered Crimea. In addition, Russia was given a right to patronize the Danubian principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia), previously completely dependent on Turkey. However, in the course of that war, Austria and Prussia took advantage of Russia, being busy with the military actions with Turkey, who decided to seize some lands from Rzeczpospolita. Catherine did not want to give them anything and her goal was to keep Rzeczpospolita as it was and under the Russian protectorate. She failed. Catherine had to settle for the first parcelling of Rzeczpospolita, and agree to transfer the Polish lands, neighboring to them, towards Prussia and Austria. For Russia, Catherine took East Belorussia from Rzeczpospolita [P. Stegniy, 2002]. After that Catherine became ready for «Greek project» - a grandiose idea about attachment of the Balkan possessions of the Ottoman empire to Russia and their division with the Austrian empire. That goal became main during the war with Turkey in 1787-1791. However, in the course of that war Sweden attacked Russia, and Catherine had to waste her time and energy for a fight with Sweden. The set goal to defeat Sweden quickly was achieved in a short time - in 1788-1790. According to the Treaty of Weralu Russia did not lose anything, but nothing was received from Sweden. The status quo was preserved. But during the Russian-Turkish War Prussia decided again to take away the lands, profitable for itself, from Rzeczpospolita. After the first parcelling of Rzeczpospolita Catherine II set a goal by all means to preserve the territory remaining in the possession of that state under the Russian influence. But because of the war with Turkey Catherine did not go to escalation of the conflict with Prussia, and agreed to the second parcelling of Rzeczpospolita in 1793. And Catherine's «Greek project» remained a pipedream. According to the Jass world of 1791, Russia achieved Turkey's con-

firmation regarding possession of Crimea and attached the small Black Sea coastline from the Yuzhny Bug River to the Dniester River. The results achieved by Catherine in that war contrasted sharply with her initial grandiose plans. Meanwhile, the national liberation movement was raised in remaining Rzeczpospolita after being parceled twice. In May 1791 the Constitution was adopted, reinforcing the royal power and in fact liquidating the Russian protectorate. The Polish army was created. The Russian empire encountered a new problem. Catherine II, as well as Prussia and Austria, set a goal not to let the strong Polish state reborn and in 1795 they went on the third parcelling of Rzeczpospolita. The result was achieved by Russia in the shortest possible time - the Russian army led by Alexander Suvorov stormed Warsaw, the Poles fought desperately, but then surrendered and were exiled to Siberia [I. de Madariaga, 1982]. That result was quite consistent with the goal. At the end of the reign Catherine set a goal to crush the revolution in France in 1789-1794, having returned the power of the French aristocracy and the Bourbon dynasty. But she was prevented by death to achieve that result.

Reign of Paul I. Paul I decided to fight not with the French revolution, but with its spread throughout Europe. Therefore, he decided to help Austria to knock out the French troops from Northern Italy, where the Russian army went headed by A. Suvorov. Suvorov achieved a brilliant result. The northern Italian states were liberated from the French. The only thing was that Russia got nothing out of it. But then Paul quarreled with England. The English fleet captured the island of Malta, where Order of Malta was located, the master of which Paul had recently become. Paul demanded that Malta be cleared, but England did not do so. Paul set a grand goal to punish England for that refusal. He concluded an alliance with France and decided to send the Russian army on a campaign against India in alliance with the French troops. India was the main English colony, which brought tremendous profits to England, and invasion of India by the Russian army could greatly frighten the English. But Paul did not achieve that goal. He was overthrown by Alexander (his son), who abolished the Indian campaign.

4. DISCUSSION

The problem of the effectiveness of Russia's foreign policy in the eighteenth century is

mainly regarded in the Russian historiography with an emphasis on its achievements. N. Pavlenko positively assesses Russia's foreign policy in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Russia's policy is assessed as balanced ["From the kingdom to the empire. Russia in the systems of international relations. 2015]. Although we can note the growth of critical assessment of Russia's actions. I. Kurukin assesses the actions of Peter I and Anna Ioannovna as noneffective. N. Petrukhintsev is in agreement with him. In the foreign historiography Russia's actions against Rzeczpospolita are assessed as "imperialist claims" [N. Aleksiu, D. Beauvois, M.-E. Ducreux, J. Kloczowski, H. Samsonowicz, P. Wandycz, 2004]. However, D. Lieven and E.K. de Ankoss, who believe that Russia's actions were conditioned by specific foreign-policy circumstances, do not agree with this [D. Lieven, 2002;7]. F.-D. Liechtenhan, and in the Russian historiography M.Yu. Anisimov stick to a similar point of view, only with regard to Russia's participation in the Seven Years' War. The foreign policy of Russia under Catherine II as corresponding to the national interests of the country is characterized by I. de Madariaga and P. Stegnyy.

5. SUMMARY

In general, only in two cases out of 13 (the Northern War and the war with Turkey in 1768-1774) the achieved results in Russia's foreign policy in the eighteenth century surpassed by far the set goals. However, this is an exception to the general trend, which is represented by the following. In 6 out of 13 cases (conflicts and wars) the results corresponded to the goals set. Russia achieved exactly what its elite wanted, but did not want to achieve more or was not able to. What is more, in 4 cases out of those 6 Russia successfully coped with unexpectedly emerging threats. But in 5 cases the result was inadequately small compared to the big and even grandiose goals set (receipt of Azov according to the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739), the zero one (Seven Years' War) or even the negative one (loss of Azov in Prut campaign of 1711). We should add 3 more cases to these 13 when the big goals were not realized because of the death of the rulers of Russia. In the first case Peter I did not have time to see the Russian fleet in the World Ocean. In the second case Catherine II did not have time to enter her army into Paris. In the third case Paul I did not have time

to see the Cossacks in India. The successors of all three deceased rulers forgot about those goals.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In general, when any state in the eighteenth century created a threat to Russia, then Russia successfully coped with those threats. The goal to reflect an emerging threat was achieved rather quickly and without spending big for the country. When it was Russia that wanted to create threats to any country, then Russia, as a rule, failed. A set goal was not achieved. Two exceptions in the form of the Treaties of Nystad and Kucuk Kaynarca only confirm this consistent pattern.

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