Entry into international society reconceptualised: the case of Russia

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Abstract. This article addresses how entry into international society has been conceptualised, suggests a reconceptualisation that will make the concept more relational, and illustrates with a case study. Part one attempts a summary of relevant debates without the English School, and directs attention to the importance of how entrants draw on memories of its subject position in the suzerain system that it left as it entered international society. Part two discusses the experiences of Russia's predecessor polities, with the focus being on the place of Russian principalities within the suzerain system of the Golden Horde (ca. 1240–1500). I argue that Russia's basic stance towards European polities in the 16th and early 17th centuries is readily understandable in terms of a key memory, namely the one of being dominated by this polity, which was itself an outgrowth of the Mongol empire. Part three demonstrates how the resulting understanding of politics was confirmed by Russian experiences in the 16th and 17th centuries. I suggest that Russia never really let go of its memories of being part of a suzerain system, and that it is therefore still suspended somewhere in the outer tier of international society.

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Since its publication in 1984, Hedley Bull and Adam Watson's *The Expansion of International Society* has served as the main point of departure for historically informed discussion of how today's states system emerged and then went on to envelop the world.[1] I begin my attempt at reconceptualising this question by drawing on debates within the English School about the concept of international society itself. I embrace the views that international society consists of a core and an outer tier, and that we need to look more closely at that which remains outside international society, chronologically and spatially. Drawing on the key insight from studies of memory, namely that any present action is, consciously or unconsciously, informed by the past, I suggest that the issue of entry may be fruitfully reconceptualised as a relation between an always emerging international society on the one hand, and a polity emerging from a suzerain system on the other. The key point is to demonstrate how the policies of entrants continue to be

[1] Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

informed by memories of the logic of the suzerain system to which they once belonged. Part two of the article discusses the experiences of Russia's predecessor polities and the memories they gave rise to. I argue that Russia's basic stance towards European polities in the 16th and early 17th centuries is readily understandable in terms of a key memory, namely the one of being part of a suzerain system dominated by the Mongol polity anachronistically known as the Golden Horde, known at the time as the Khipchak Khanate.[2] The Khipchak Khanate, with its capital Sarai, was established in the 1240s as part of the Mongol empire, from which it subsequently distanced itself. It ruled Russian lands until the end of the 16th century. I also argue that this memory comes with an understanding of politics as being about constituting the centre of the system. Part three notes how this understanding of politics was confirmed by Russian experiences in the 16th and 17th centuries. This was also the key gestation period of international society. I suggest that Russia never really let go of its memories of being part of a suzerain system, and that it is therefore still suspended somewhere in the outer tier of international society. I conclude that reconceptualising the question of entry into international society as a relation between that society on the one hand, and polities which come in contact with it from out of other systems on the other, may help us specify present-day aporias and hierarchies of international society. From most, if not all, polities with a long memory of what is represented as a continuous history, voices are often heard arguing that the recognition afforded them within international society is inadequate to what they feel it *should* be. This goes for powers that have long claimed great power status with only mixed success, such as China, Russia, Japan, Iran and India, but it also goes for powers the likes of Egypt and Serbia. If studied in the terms suggested here, such claims emerge as springing logically from mnemonic practices that are tied up with existing historical constellations during the polity's entry into international society for each such polity, there is work to be done in mapping and specifying what that historical constellation was, and how it has transmuted into the claims about a lack of recognition that we hear today.

Debating international society and its expansion

In a move that is as close to a defining moment of the English School that one is likely to come, Hedley Bull built on Martin Wight's work and proposed his double definition to the effect that

a system of states is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions to behave at least in some measure – as parts of a whole [. . .whereas] A society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.[3]

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[2] David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 141; Charles J. Halperin, 'Muscovite Political Institutions in the 14th Century', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, New Series*, 1:2 (2000), pp. 237–57.

[3] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 9–10, 13.

Some twenty years ago, Jennifer Welsh and I directed some friendly fire against the English School's conceptualisation of international society.[4] We tried to demonstrate how European international society was, from the very start, dependent on having internal and external Others in relation to which it could self-define. That insight was already there in the extant literature,[5] but we felt that the wide-ranging analytical and political effects of that insight were not acknowledged. We laid out the case for Turkey as a key Other, and performed a reading of how European states constructed international society among other things by othering the Ottoman (that othering being preceded by othering of the Saracen and succeeded by othering of the Turk). Our immediate target was Bull and Watson's then recent study of how European international society expanded to the world at large.[6]

In an important work, Edward Keene brought post-colonial scholarship to the English School.[7] In line with the rekindled interest in empires and imperial history, he saw international society's core as having been defined by what 19th century international law defined as the standard of civilisation.[8] Keene then carefully spelled out the mechanisms of exclusion this has left within contemporary international society. Paul Keal's work has further demonstrated how the forging of an international society does not only hinge on inclusion, but also on exclusion, among other things by demonstrating how international law's insistence on using state-like social organisation as a criterion for recognition led to the exclusion of countless indigenous peoples.[9]

These attacks on the concept of international society for papering over how inclusion spells exclusion were also part of a rather extensive debate within the School about whether the concept of international society may best be understood as a stylisation of historical sequences, or as a functional construct. James Mayall saw it as basically historical, Alan James as basically theoretical, whereas Barry Buzan once saw it as a hybrid, arguing that the emergence of international society may be understood as an ideational process turning on meaning that provides a core, but that is inextricably tied up with the functional emergence of an international system, which providers an outer tier.[10] In a later work, Buzan did

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[4] Iver B. Neumann and Jennifer M. Welsh, 'The Other in European Self-Definition. A Critical Addendum to the Literature on International Society', *Review of International Studies*, 17:4 (1991), pp. 327–48. The theoretical inspiration for that attack was the post-structural conceptualisation of identity, where the key point is that any identity is predicated on delineation from something outside itself. The corollary is that the outside is constitutive of identity.

[5] 'The greater the cultural unity of a states-system, the greater its sense of distinctness from the surrounding world is likely to be'; Martin Wight (ed. Hedley Bull), *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), p. 34.

[6] Bull and Watson, *Expansion*.

[7] Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[8] Comp. Garrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984a).

[9] Paul Keal, *European Conquest and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The Moral Backwardness of International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); also Roger Epp, 'The English School on the Frontiers of International Society: A Hermeneutic Approach', *Review of International Studies*, 24:5 (1998), pp. 47–63.

[10] James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 151; Alan James, 'System or Society', *Review of International Studies*, 19:3 (1993), pp. 269–88; Barry Buzan, 'From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School', *International Organization*, 47:3 (1993), pp. 327–52.

away with the distinction between the ideational and the functional altogether.[11]
There is a strong case for doing so. As already Max Weber pointed out, the most
instrumental action is still imbued with meaning, and the most symbolic action also
has some instrumentality. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine that two polities
would be aware of one another, let alone communicate, without a modicum of
shared meaning and some regularity in the quality of interaction. Ontically, the
difference between international system and international society seems unsustain-
able. As demonstrated by the output of the School, however, it has proven itself
as a nice analytical tool, which means that we may embrace the concept on
pragmatic grounds.

One of the key reasons why some distinction between two tiers of international
society is called for, is to be found already in Wight's early reading of Grotius to
the effect that Grotius (and, by implication, perhaps also Wight himself), held that
'there is an outer circle that embraces all mankind, under natural law, and an inner
circle, the *corpus Christianorum*, bound by the law of Christ'.[12] We are moving on
the level of the actors themselves here, and not on analytical ground. Whether or
not the distinction between layers of international society is analytically felicitous
or not, it is hermeneutically real.

These general debates about how to conceptualise international society have a
direct bearing on the specific question of how to conceptualise the processes which
enlarge it, for they suggest that, regardless of whether we talk about system versus
society, a core and an outer tier or the like, international society itself is a *layered*
phenomenon. Joining it is not a digital question of being in or out, but an
analogue question of the degree to which one is in. When theorists plunge for a
two-tiered model of international society (rather than, say, a four-tiered one) and
so re-digitalise the issue, it is simply out of convenience.

There is yet another development within the school that has a bearing on how
we should conceptualise entry into international society. Building on Wight's
historical work, the School has evolved what is now a reasonably-sized body of
work on the comparative sociology of systems of states. In their recent book-length
stock-taking of the School, Linklater and Suganami very appositely allotted an
entire chapter to the sociology of states-systems.[13] Adam Watson hypothesised that
world history oscillates between periods of empire and periods of state systems.[14]
Buzan and Little studied interaction between different polities over a period of

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[11] Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society: English School Theory and the Social Structure
of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[12] Wight, *Systems*, p. 28, comp. Shogo Suzuki 'Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European
International Society', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:1 (2005), pp. 137–64, on p.
156. International society is conceived as being an anarchical society. As Durkheim pointed out,
however, societies are despotic, in the sense that they lay down what should count as normal
behaviour and so may be seen as a structure of power (systems are arrangements through which
values are authoritatively allocated for a society, as Easton would have it). The tension between
anarchy on the one hand and society on the other is the constitutive tension of the School. By dint
of an internal logical, then, the Grotian tradition seems to be the broad home for the School itself.

[13] Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 189–222. For them, however, this should preferably be a
typically modernist and historiosophical undertaking sketching 'long-term historical processes in
which visions of the unity of the human race influence the development of the states-system', p. 190.

[14] Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London:
Routledge, 1992).

60,000 years.[15] Furthermore, in addition to studies of how European international society expanded, such as Bull and Watson's – what an anthropologist would call diffusion studies – we now also have some country studies of how specific states came to be expanded upon.[16]

Taken together, there are three major reasons why the time is ripe for a reconceptualisation of of international society. First, there is a broad desire to move conceptualisation away from what Cindy O'Hagan has characterised as the universalist overtones in Bull's discussion of international society.[17] It is simply too typically modernist homogenising and too hagiographical in its occlusion of those marginalised and excluded by it has become commonplace. I should like to stress that work by Bull, Watson and other on how a set of European norms and practices have expanded to cover the rest of the globe is valuable in and of itself. Political science has outcomes of political practices as its key focus, and it is a fact that more and more polities in a higher and higher degree have adopted norms and practices emanating from Europe. The problem lies elsewhere. A focus on the expansion of international society occludes the experience of being expanded upon – the focus directs attention only to one side of the social relation in question. A focus on expansion does not invite studying in what degree other norms and practices that European ones made their mark on the resulting consensus. It also rules out a scrutiny of the degree in which such norms and practices are variously anchored throughout the system.

The second reason why the highlighting of how international society's constitutive outside constitutes that society seems a bit outdated is the empirical fact that we now actually have a number of studies that perform such scrutiny of how international society's norms and practices are variously anchored throughout the system. If an international society exists when states are conscious of common interests and values and share in the working of common institutions, then the places to look for it are surely in thinking about International Relations *throughout that society*, as well as in the patterned practices of states as they exist in specific fields. Note that international society should, therefore, seemingly be understood as a kind of structure that may only be studied through its effects, and that is, by the same token, constituted by those effects. Timothy Dunne called his history of the School's origins *Inventing International Society* exactly in order to underline the imagined nature of international society, as well as the constitutive, and hence political, role played in its invention of imagination by those working with the confines of the School.[18]

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[15] Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[16] Bull and Watson, *Expansion*. For China, see Yongjin Zhang, 'China's Entry into International Society: Beyond the Standard of "Civilization"', *Review of International Studies*, 17:1 (1991), pp. 3–16. For Russia, see Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London: Routledge 1996), and *Uses of the Other: 'The East' in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). For Greece, see Yannis A. Stivachtis, *The Enlargement of International Society: Culture versus Anarchy and Greece's Entry into International Society* (London: Macmillan, 1998). For Japan, see Suzuki, *Japan's Socialisation*. See also Paul Sharp 'Mullah Zaeef and Taliban diplomacy: An English School Approach', *Review of International Studies*, 29:4 (2003), pp. 481–98.

[17] Jacintha O'Hagan, *Conceptualizing the West in International Relations: From Spengler to Said* (London: Palgrave, 2002), p. 129.

[18] Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

There is a third reason why I think we need a new bout of theorising of how European international society has expanded and is expanding, which is not to do with developments internal to the School itself, but with developments in social theory generally. Beginning with works such as Pierre Nora's and taking its clue from classics of social theory such as Halbwachs's work, there has been a steady growth in studies of the role of memory, or more precisely of mnemonic techniques, in shaping social phenomena generally and identities specifically.[19] One will recall how both Marx and Mill, together with most other 19th century thinkers, held that the Asian mode of production was static, suspended in time. One will also recall that Western modernity tended to think of having a history not only as having writing, but more specifically as having a state. Within social anthropology, such ideas have been shot down repeatedly. In a classic study, Leach discussed how 'structural amnesia', by which he means the social work of changing historical narratives, including their consecration in ritual and myth, is key on legitimising rule.[20] Particularly in societies that do not have the mnemonic technique of writing, history is bent to produce tales of how today's social world had 'always' been there. Eric Wolf looked at the colonial encounter in a book aptly titled *Europe and the peoples without History*.[21] Fabian delivered a blistering critique of social science for simply slotting the histories of non-European groups into a ready-made, one-size-fits-all form which meant that those histories were simply elided as sources of insight, with those political effects such a way of knowledge production would predictably have.[22] I think this critique could also be turned towards theorising of the expansion of international society. We have neglected the importance of memory for states entering international society.

From expansion to relation

By way both of illustrating how entry was conceptualised by early School work and of easing into the case study on Russia and its predecessor polities, consider what Adam Watson writes about the background to Russian entry in *The Expansion of International Society:*

In the thirteenth century the Tatar Golden Horde swept westwards over the Eurasian plain. Moscow fell in 1238. Soon afterwards the Tatars destroyed Cracow, the spiritual capital of Poland, and pushed on into the heart of Europe. Pope Alexander IV summoned Latin Christendom to a crusade. The Poles took the lead in pushing back the Tatars, confirming themselves as the bulwark of the Latin world against the East. The Tatars were driven out of Poland and western Russia; but they stabilized their immense suzerain empire from the Dniepr to the China Sea (approximately the territory of the Soviet Union), and embraced

[19] Pierre Nora, (ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Three Vols.* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press [1984] 1996–1998); Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* New York, NY: Harper & Row, [1950] 1980). For an overview of work within IR, see Duncan Bell (ed.), *Memory. Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present* (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2009) and works quoted therein.
[20] Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Structure* (London: Athlone, 1954).
[21] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1982).
[22] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other* (New York, NY.: Columbia University Press, 1983).

Islam. Their khans conducted sporadic negotiations with European sovereigns and married into the Byzantine and other royal families; but the subject principalities of their empire were substantially isolated from the rest of the world.[23]

This is one of the few places in which the IR literature touches base with one important part of the pre-history of the European states system.[24] Watson's is a problematic *précis*. There are some problems of precision. The Golden Horde, or properly, the Khipchak Khanate, was established after the foray described, and did not exist before it. In 1238, Moscow was definitely one of the least significant of the many towns ruled by a prince. The Mongols were not pushed back, but retreated for reasons of their own. The Mongol empire maintained its full cohesion only for a couple of decades. Although some Mongols adopted Islam, others adopted Christendom, and those who stayed in the core areas around present-day Mongolia and were not assimilated by their subjects eventually adopted Lamaistic Buddhism. Mongol subject principalities were somewhat isolated from the rest of the world, but in the case of the Russian lands, that was among other things a result of decisions taken by Rus' princes. Let us put all that to one side. The problem that I want to address is Watson's conceptualisation of Russian entry into international society, which may be treated as emblematic of early English School work on the issue overall. To Watson, the polity of Muscovy and its Grand Dukes were

> quicker than the other Russian principalities to adapt to and profit from Tatar suzerainty. [. . .] They learnt Tatar techniques of war and administration, and helped to extract the tribute due to the Khan from other Russian princes. Muscovy thus developed its statehood under the aegis of the Tatar system. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the grip of Tatar suzerainty waned. In 1480 Muscovy threw off the Tatar allegiance and established itself as a Russian successor state to the empire of the Khans [. . .] The area of Tatar dominion had become something of a power vacuum.[25]

In light of the more detailed reading that I will give below, I think this is a very admirable summing up of what transpired. The problem is that the effects of Russian experience with and memories of having been part of the suzerain system of the Golden Horde do not come into play when Watson goes on to discuss how first Muscovy and then Russia become the passive object of the expansion of international society. Anterior Russian experiences are not acknowledged as being of much importance to the case of entry To talk of *The Expansion of International Society* is to imagine a process taking place from a centre, and then to spread outwards from that centre. To Watson and the early English School, although there may be set-backs and even reversions, the conception is of a process where one party imposes its order on the other, with little or no residue and without being itself changed by the experience. But if there were no residue, how to explain that Russia is still, some five hundred years after international society may be said to begin to congeal, in its outer rim, regardless of its traditional Christianity? I would argue that neglecting of the fact that entry is a relational process may result in a partial understanding of the outcome of entry. To take another example, in his chapter on China in *The Expansion of International Society*, Gong approvingly quotes Mary Wright's book *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism* to the effect

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[23] Adam Watson, 'Russia and the European States System', in Hedley Bull & Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), pp. 61–74, on p. 61.
[24] But comp. Buzan & Little, *International Systems*.
[25] Watson, *Expansion*, pp. 61–2, 17.

that China 'accepted and mastered the principles and practices of Western diplomacy and succeeded and succeeded in using them as the main bulwark of Chinese sovereignty'.[26] Well yes, but if that were the whole story, with no residue left, then how to account for the fact that it is still an open question in what degree and in which contexts China accepts these principles and practices today? Are we really warranted in talking about a 'last stand' at all? In order better to understand these questions, I suggest that we turn towards a conceptualisation of entry into international society as a *relational* process.[27]

One way to do that would be generalise where new members come from. Although Watson explicitly acknowledges that Russia's predecessor polity Muscovy was part of a suzerain system, he and the other contributors to the volume nonetheless begin with a given analytical phenomenon – international society – on the one hand, and an empirically given polity – in this case the predecessor Russia – on the other, and then proceed to tell a story of how the latter is 'socialised' by the former. There are other ways to proceed. According to Wight, there are only two primary kinds of international systems: sovereign and suzerain. If, with Wight, Bull, Watson and all other English School theorists known to me, we make the supposition that there has only been one sovereign system around for the last two long millennia, then it follows that any new member entering European inter-national society, which is conceptualised as sovereign, must have its background in a suzerain system.[28] I suggest that we conceptualise the relationship between European international society on the one hand and entrants on the other by treating entrants as breakaways from suzerain systems, and then look at their interaction in terms of what we may call narrative sociabilities. This is a concept suggested by anthropologist Marshall Sahlins in order to capture how each type of situation where two or more parties meet have a set of categories and relationships that is pertinent to it.[29] For example, there will exist a narrative about how a representative of another political entity should be heralded, received and treated by the head of a polity (for example as a diplomatic envoy). In Europe, if a person wholly unknown by appearance and name arrived at a community in the late 15th century, the situation would have a number of narrative sociabilities attached to it. The person could be a pilgrim, a trader, an envoy, etc. There would be sartorial and habitual categories with which to distinguish between these sociabilities. If the person were acknowledged as a diplomatic envoy, then that would set in train a number of specific practices for how to treat him. These would be culturally specific. Conversely, if the person were actually a European diplomat, he would share in European narrative sociabilities, and so have a number of specific expectations of what should transpire. Since people and cultures are often not self-reflective about their narrative sociabilities, there will be problems, and accidents will happen. If, as Watson rightly points out, Russians 'learnt Tatar

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[26] Garrit W. Gong, 'China's Entry into International Society', in Hedley Bull & Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984b). pp. 171–84, on p. 180.

[27] Within the discipline, the first call to arms for such an approach was Patrick T. Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, 'Relations before States: Substance, Process and the Study of World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:3 (1999), pp. 291–332.

[28] The prerequisite is that it does not come out of a situation of non-system, as it were of a high degree of isolation.

[29] Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities. Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 1981).

techniques of war and administration', whereas Europeans did not, then we would expect there to be different narrative sociabilities in play where representatives of Russians and European polities meet.

This would not have mattered if we lived in a world without memory and other phenomena that make for non-rationalist action. As Dale Copeland notes, if the assumption of rationality held, then rising states (or, to generalise, newcomers to any social system) would keep their head down when entering the system, so that they could learn the ropes and build up relevant power resources as they went along.[30] We know that this is not how newcomers behave. Newcomers to the system do not act according to a logic of interest maximisation, but rather according to a different logic, which partially grew out of those norms and those practices that they carried with them in memory from their previous setting with a suzerain system. There will be expectations on either side. Because these expectations are certain to have effects, a hermeneuticist would say that any meeting is always already situated. We may specify these expectations by saying that they will grow out of specific memories and specific mnemonic techniques that activate certain memories in certain contexts. Phenomenologists argue that any action draws, again consciously *as well as unconsciously*, on stuff that happened in the past (activated by way of mnemonic techniques) as well as on stuff that may happen in the future as a consequence of that action (an anticipation of consequences that is also by necessity limited). If so, then memories of previous systems are by necessity relevant for any entry into a new one. Former experience and present actions are tied together by the category of mnemonic techniques. Hypothetically, one would expect the importance of such memories at the point of entry to be a correlative of the degree of institutionalisation of relations within the previous system, as well as of the perceived importance of those relations for questions of identity. Note that the importance of memories of the previous system for the newcomer will not only form the newcomer's horizon of expectation of how the new system will work, but that memories will also inform actions in such a way that the newcomer will be very likely indeed to spend time in the outer circle of international society for as long as this condition lasts. Entries may last for a very long time. This is also the ground on which I would like to lodge the claim for contemporary relevance of the reconceptualisation offered here. Together with power shifts, emergent qualities of the system itself and the like, one factor that perpetuates the 'inner circle/outer circle' or core and outer tier quality of international society is indeed the existence of newcomers. That said, in principle there is no guarantee that a newcomer will *ever* leave the outer circle.

One more point seems in order before we proceed. There is a lingering sense in the extant literature that the international society which is to be entered is somehow a given. This is a point that may be attacked on ontic grounds – no social entity can be stable over time, any addition to a whole will necessarily change that whole, etc. – but let it suffice here to stress that, regardless of whether we follow Wight in plunging for 1494 or 1648 as an (invariably problematic) shorthand, it is an historical fact that polities such as the predecessors of present-day Turkey and Russia were in some senses there in both instances.[31]

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[30] Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major Wars* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2000).
[31] Wight, *Systems*.

These polities were in a very real sense the constitutive outside of international society from the very beginning. I now turn to a closer reading of the suzerain system out of which first Muscovy and then Russia emerged.

The raw material of Russian political memories

The political history of Rus' from the beginning of the 11th century to the time of the Mongol invasion in 1237–1240 is the history of wave after wave of internecine fighting between male heirs of the polity's alleged founder, Ryurik, for control of the dynasty. Every Ryurikid male was a potential ruler, and every Ryurikid head of a lineage with a patrimony (*otchina*) was a prince. Patrimonies were a city, or a clutch of cities, complete with hinterland. There were many of them. They could be inherited (either by collateral seniority or primogeniture). They could be taken by force, or they could be given by the ruler of Kiev, the 'mother of Russian cities' and traditionally the city of residence for the *primus inter pares* of the heads of the Ryurikid lineages. Rus' should be categorised as a suzerain system of polities centred on Kiev, rather than as a single polity. Note that neighbouring non-Christian nomads in the steppes to the east, particularly the Pecheneg and later the Khipchaks, served as regular allies and key players in the brotherly squabbles between Rus' princes. There was lively interaction between steppe peoples and Rus' from very early on. The struggles between lineages went through a particularly intense period in the late 1100s and early 1200s. Three of the lineages were particulary active. First, there were the descendants of Rostislav Mstislavich, known as the Rostislavichi and based in Smolensk (a relatively wealthy city, not least due to its trade with Germany). Then there were the descendants of Oleg Svyatoslavich, the Ol'govichi, based in Chernigov. Finally, there was Roman Mstislavich and his kin, based in Volynia.

A fourth key lineage, the Monomashchi, watched the struggle from Vladimir, which through the 13th century was a key city. In the North of Russia, things were relatively quiet. Novgorod, which had been under the sway of Kiev since that city left the hands of the Khazars and became the capital of Rus' in the ninth century, had acquired a certain measure of independence during the twelfth century, and was run by an elected mayor (*posadnik*) and a town assembly (*veche*).[32]

The struggles between the lineages had come to a head in 1203, when the Ol'govichi, with the help of the Khipchaks, had invaded Kiev to dispose of Roman Mstislavich and had wrought much damage to the city. Their victory was short lived, for the Rostislavichi took over the city later that same year. The city changed hands a number of times for the next decade, when it came to rest in the hands of the Rostislavichi. There it remained until 1235, but for the next five years, it changed hands seven times.[33] Neighbouring powers were brought into the squabbling on a regular basis. In short, the Russia that Mongol forces reconnoitred in 1223 was a loose suzerain system of lineage-based polities characterised by a high level of conflict and open lines to allies from the adjacent steppe.

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[32] John L.I. Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200–1304* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 17–9.
[33] Fennell, *Crisis*, pp. 27, 34, 73–75.

The size of the Mongol population at the time of Chinggis Khan has been estimated at 700.000.[34] Chinggis and his immediate successors continuously fed its ranks with conquered steppe peoples. The Mongols lay claim to universal sovereignty. They conceived the world as a Mongol empire to be, under Chinggis Khan's successors, known as the Golden Kin. All peoples were potential members of the universal Mongol empire'. Allsen writes about these political ideas that they

> can be traced back to the Türk quaghanate, were in all likelihood transmitted to the Mongols by the Uighur Turks. In the Mongol adaptation of this ideological system it was held that Eternal Heaven (*Möngke Tenggeri*), the sky god and the chief deity of the [Shamanistic] steppe nomads, bestowed upon Chinggis Qan a mandate to bring the entire world under his sway. This grant of universal sovereignty gave the Mongols the right, or perhaps more accurately, placed upon them the obligation, to subjugate and chastise any nation or people refusing to join the Empire of the Great Mongols on a voluntary basis.[35]

The idea of a heavenly mandate was, of course, also a Chinese idea.[36] To ask where the idea of conquest came from may be to ask a moot question, for raiding and preferably subduing sedentary populations into paying tribute was a traditional nomad pastime which, if successful, resulted in empires.[37] Centralisation of the empire peaked under Chinggis Khan's grandson, Möngke. Within his central administration, he established regional secretariats for China, Turkestan, Persia and, although this is not altogether clear, Rus'.[38] He recalled all the imperial seals, insignia and orders from the court (*jarligh*) and issued new ones .This gave him a chance to screen all the empire's middle men and all his own residents. He then restricted the availability of the vital postal system to these people only. 'A third measure was intended to circumscribe the power of the imperial princes within the confines of their own appanages (*fen-ti*). Thenceforth, these princes could neither summon their subjects on their own authority nor issue any orders concerning financial matters without first conferring with officials of the imperial court.'[39]

The great khan had exclusive right to conduct relations with others on behalf of the empire.[40] When Chinggis Khan died in 1227, he had not only instructed his sons to conquer the world, he had allotted parts that were not yet conquered.[41] The extreme West of the Mongol empire was the preserve of Jochi. Jochi had already reconnoitred the lands, and established a fledgling polity called the White Horde somewhere north of the Caspian Sea. Jochi's reconnoitring in 1223 had also resulted in first contact between Mongols and the Rus'. The importance of Mongol superior strategy was in evidence already during this first clash. The Rus' princes, however, seemingly reckoning that the Mongols were simply another steppe nuisance, of the kind that they had encountered many times since the founding of

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[34] Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism. The Politics of the Great Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251–1259* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1987), p. 5.

[35] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, p. 42.

[36] Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p. 104.

[37] Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[38] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, p. 101.

[39] Ibid., pp. 80–1.

[40] Ibid., p. 45.

[41] A correspondence is often assumed between the four sons and the subsequent Mongol-led polities in China, Persia, Central Asia and Russia, but as argued in Peter Jackson, 'From *Ulus* to Khanate: the Making of the Mongol States, c. 1220–c. 1290', pp. 12–37 in Reuven Amitai-Preiss & David Morgan (eds), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 12–37, this is too neat.

the first Rus' polity, paid no more heed to steppe affairs than before. That was a key mistake. In 1238, the Mongols returned with a vengeance. For the next two years, they effectively overcame all military oppositions from Bolgars, Khipchaks, the Rus', Poles and Hungarians. They established themselves in the Rus' and Hungarian lands, and had scouting parties as far west as Venice and Vienna. Once again, the campaign went according to plan. Cities which did not offer resistance were spared, cities that did were more or less destroyed. The result, here as elsewhere in the empire, was patchy destruction of the conquered areas.[42]

There is no reason whatsoever to assume that, if they had forged ahead, the Mongols would not have subdued the rest of the landmass to their west and made it into part of the Mongol order in one way or the other. As it happened, news of Ögödei's death reached the extreme west of the empire in 1241. At this time, not only Batu, who was Jochi's oldest son, but also Ögödei's oldest son Gülüg and Tolui's oldest son Möngke were there. The presence of three out of four Chingisid lineages was not by chance; the Western front was at this time the key area of new conquest, which meant that representatives of the different lineages were there to keep an eye on one another. Now, it rather became more important to keep an eye on one another in the Mongol heartland around Kharakhorum, where the succession would be decided. In the upshot, both Gülüg and Möngke left the Western frontier for the steppes. The focus of imperial politics turned away from the fairly narrow strip of land that remained to be conquered, namely Europe. This left the Jochids, led by Batu, alone in the West with his newly won Rus' possessions.

When Batu died in 1256, he had built a tent capital in Saray on the Volga (100 km north of today's Astrakhan) for his khanate, which came to be known locally as the Golde Horde. Batu was followed by his short-lived son (Sartaq, a Christian) and grandson, before his brother Berke (1257–1266) took over. Berke lost Georgia to another Chingisid line, the Il-khan of Persia, but the overall story of his reign was that he gained more room for manoeuvre within the Mongol empire, whose cohesion was now definitely loosening.[43]

We have little history writing on the Golden Horde, among other things because its archives were destroyed together with most of its city life by Tamerlane's nomadic invading force (emanating from Samarkand) in 1390.[44] Since the steppe-dwelling Mongols lacked expertise in running administrative apparatuses, throughout the Mongol empire these were mostly staffed locally. In the case of the Golden Horde, however, there was little by way of local administrative personnel to be found, and so the khagan relied on Khwarazm Turks (in Russian *Bessermiiny*). The Golden Horde adopted Islam as its official religion under Özbek (1313–1341), in conjunction with which they also adopted the Persian administrative *diwan* system.

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[42] Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 82.
[43] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, pp. 62–3.
[44] The Golden Horde had been in dynastic crisis since the death of Khan Berdibeg in 1359, one reason being the swelling of the numbers of the Golden Kin, see Berthold Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde: Die Mongolen in Russland 1223–1502*, vol. two (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965). The object of the invasion was Khan Tokhtamesh (1376–1395), a previous protégé of Tamerlane's who succeeded in uniting the Golden Horde with the White Horde to its east. The White Horde had been established by the same Mongol campaign that spied out the Russian lands in 1223.

The Mongols destroyed Kiev and established a new layer of Mongol overlord-ship to what was now becoming a suzerain system of Rus' cities within an imperial structure – that of the Golde Horde. The Golden Horde, which was itself still part of an imperial structure, continued to follow the standard operational procedures of Mongol rule. As summed up by Allsen, the basic demands that the Mongols imposed on all of their sedentary subjects were: '(1) the ruler must come personally to court, (2) sons and younger brothers are to be offered as hostages, (3) the population must be registered, (4) militia units are to be raised, (5) taxes are to be sent in, and (6) a *darughachi* is to take charge of all affairs'.[45] To the Mongols,

> the surrender of a foreign state [that is, polity] was not just an admission of military defeat and of political subordination, but a pledge that the surrendering state would actively support the Mongols in their plans for further conquest. To fulfill this pledge, the surrendered state had to place its entire resources at the disposal of the empire, and because a census was needed to identify and utilize these resources effectively, the Mongols came to consider submission and the acceptance of the census as synonymous acts.[46]

A census was made of Kiev in 1245 and of Novgorod in 1259. Following Mongol standard procedures, the khan initially dispatched *baskaki*, personal representa-tives, to live in key Rus' cities. After some decades (how many is not exactly known), the Mongols changed their policy and dispatched representatives who were based in the capital Saray on shorter inspections (*darugi*). The Rus' called these *posoli* (*posly* is still the term for ambassadors in Russian). When the *posoli* were not on missions, they worked in the administration in Saray.[47] In the degree that there remained a *primus inter pares* amongst the Rus' princes, it was the grand prince of Vladimir. His rule, like that of all princes, was dependent on a Mongol patent (*yarlik*). The principle of personal presence was replayed on the regional level, which meant that Rus' princes journeyed to Saray in person to deliver their pledges of loyalty. The Rus' probably paid their taxes partly in coin, partly in furs.

Given Mongolian superior military force, the temptation to embrace the inevitable and collaborate must have been very strong indeed. The key bandwagoner was Aleksander Nevskiy. Already in the early years of the Mongol invasion, Aleksander had spent the time successfully fighting Swedish detachments (1240, earning his moniker) and German Knights (1242). These fights were part of a protracted struggle for mastery over the lands lying between them. When Yaroslav died in 1248, Aleksander was next in line of succession, but it was his younger brother Andrey who seized the throne. Andrey was one of the few Rus' princes to advocate resistance to the Mongols. Nonetheless, in order to hang on to the throne, he needed the patent from the Khan, so both he, and eventually his brother Aleksander, made their way first to Saray, and then onwards to Kharakorum, where Andrey was confirmed in Vladimir and Aleksander in Kiev. Since Vladimir had been the main prize since the Tatar invasion, Aleksander did not rest content with this decision, and in 1252 he went to the Horde and obtained their help to oust Andrey. Andrey fled to Sweden. Aleksander had managed to put paid not only to his brother Andrey, but to organised opposition to the Mongols as such. As Fennell puts it,

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[45] Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, p. 114.
[46] Ibid., p. 124; comp. Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005.
[47] Halperin, C[harles] J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press), 1985, p. 33.

this was the end of any form of organized opposition to the Tatars by the rulers of Russia for a long time to come. It was the beginning of Russia's real subservience to the Golden Horde [. . .] the so-called 'Tatar Yoke' began not so much with Baty's [that is, Batu's] invasion of Russia as with Aleksander's betrayal of his brothers.[48]

From this time on, the enrolment of Mongol backing became a routine part of internecine struggles. There was nothing new about this: first the nomadic Pechenegs and then the Khipchaks had been drawn on in similar fashion by the Rus' princes before. Now, once more, the appeal to steppe forces became a key factor in the intensification of direct Mongol control with Rus' political life. There is a causal link between this development and the period of intensified Mongol raids and invasions towards the end of the thirteenth century. At this point, not only were Mongols from the Golden Horde brought in, Rus' princes who were up against other Rus' princes with Horde backing actually ventured further field to bring in the backing of Mongols insurgents from the Nogay further south.[49] Rus' princes stood against Rus' princes, each backed by a Mongol ally.

In 1304, the grand prince of Vladimir died. Three developments brought about a change in politics. First, the princes of Moscow and Tver' emerged as the key players in Rus' politics, among other things as a result of their population increase in the wake of the Mongol invasion, which was again to do with nice strategic location (with Moscow in particular being something of a hub of the river system).[50] Secondly, among other things because of the now firmly established principle of primogeniture, these princes headed more clearly organised families, which served as a firm power base. Thirdly, the firm wedding between families and cities meant that the territoriality of this power base was now assured in a much higher degree than before. Following decades of struggle between Moscow and Tver', Moscow emerged victorious and Ivan I was granted the title of grand prince of Vladimir by the Mongols in 1328. From Ivan I onwards, Moscow was the emergent centre of gravity of Rus' politics, and the home both of the great prince (who underlined his success by adding 'and of all Russia' to his princely title) and of the Metropolitan. Moscow remained completely dependent on the Mongols, however, to the point that brothers appealed to Saray and even travelled there in order to settle their succession struggles.[51] Moscow took its time fighting down Tver' competition. In 1353, Novgorod supported the Tver' bid for the grand principality of Vladimir over the Moscow one by sending envoys to Saray to plead for Tver's case.[52]

The grand princes of Moscow kept up their brilliance in playing the alliance game. Whereas Tver' looked West, to the rising power of Lithuania. Moscow stuck to the Mongols of the Golden Horde. This served them well, for they were able to stave off three attacks by Lithuania and Tver' between 1368 and 1372. As summed up by Halperin,

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[48] Fennell, *Crisis*, p. 108.

[49] The Nogay, named after the Mongol Nogay Khan, based in the Caucasus around present-day Kalmykia and harbouring a number of Khipchaks, were at loggerheads with the rest of the Golden Horde in the 1290s, and established themselves as a khanate in 1319. They 'built a power base in the Crimea and the Balkans and contested with the khans of the lower Volga for control of the Golden Horde', Halperin, *Russian and The Golden Horde*, p. 18.

[50] The two other cities to be ruled by Grand Dukes, Nizhniy Novgorod and Ryazan', came up short on both counts.

[51] Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 58.

[52] Ibid., p. 51.

the special relationship between the Golden Horde and Moscow was strengthened in the middle of the fourteenth century, when the Mongols faced a new challenge to their hegemony. Grand prince Olgerd of Lithuania struck deep into the Tatar orbit by bringing both Tver' and Riazan' into his sphere of influence and applying pressure to Novgorod. Olgerd's opposition to Moscow was not rooted in principle, and he played politics by the same rules as everyone else. Thus, with the eye on Moscow, he sent a delegation to the Golden Horde to negotiate a rapprochement. The Mongols, however, had decided, logically, to use Moscow as a counterweight to the growing power of Lithuania. The Muscovites were therefore successful in their attempts to undermine the Lithuanian embassy, and the Mongols, in a fine display of political delicacy, arrested the Lithuanian envoys and handed them over to Moscow. Olgerd was compelled to ransom his emissaries from his enemies.[53]

The decisive Moscow victory over Tver' occurred in 1375. In 1478, Ivan III subdued Novgorod. Moscow owed its victory to the superior way in which they had played the alliance game *vis-à-vis* the Mongols compared to other Rus' polities. From this time on, in order to underline how Moscow was changing the suzerain system of Rus' lineages into a polity centred on Moscow, it is customary to refer to this polity as Muscovy. Muscovy was still subservient to the Golden Horde, and would remain so for another hundred years.

In terms of systems logic, the arrival of Lithuania was a major event, since it challenged the suzerain system by adding another possible centre of gravity for Rus' princes. It is true that Lithuania was at first sucked into the suzerain system centring on the Golden Horde's ambit, in the degree that the Golden Horde certainly saw Lithuania as a vassal, and Lithuania itself at some point probably did.[54] It is also true that the Golden Horde backed Moscow in its war with Lithuania in 1406, and also at subsequent occasions. As the Golden Horde weakened and Moscow as well as Lithuania emerged ever stronger, however, diplomatic relations between the Golden Horde and Lithuania became closer and also less lop-sided. Despite certain temporary set-backs such as the Moscow-Lithuanian treaty of friendship of 1449 (a short-lived affair anyway), the Golden Horde and Lithuania were more often than not at one on opposing the rise of Moscow. It was an alliance that did not fulfil the goal for which it was formed, however, for Moscow (which could in turn draw on its good relations with the emergent Crimean khanate) emerged triumphant, whereas the Golden Horde fell apart. Note, and this is crucial in our context, that the patterns of alliance do not follow religious or cultural lines. The same may be said about the alliance Muscovy and some remnants of the Golden Horde formed in 1502, against the Great Horde, that is, the polity of nomadic Mongol-led forces that remained on the steppe.

To sum up, the key political fact in the Rus' lands from 1240 to the end of the 15th century was the suzerainty of the Mongols, based in Saray. Rus' princes fought one another, and used Mongol backing as the key power resource in their internecine struggles. The Mongols lent their support to various princes with a view to upholding tribute. They also followed the same policy towards the Rus' princes that they themselves and other steppe peoples had experienced from the Chinese side: they played the Rus' princes off one another so that no one of them should emerge as a uniting force that could challenge Mongol rule. As the Golden Horde

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[53] Ibid., p. 54; for details, see George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia. A History of Russia*, vol. III (New Haven, CN.: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 207.
[54] Comp. Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, p. 264.

started to fall apart from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, Moscow was nonetheless able to emerge as the key political centre, which proceeded to relativise Mongol suzerainty and, using techniques lent from the Mongols, unite first the Rus' lands and then the old lands of the Golden Horde.[55] Muscovy seems to have stopped paying tribute to the Golden Horde some time around 1470, and made an alliance with the Western part of what was left of it in 1502. Muscovy effectively swallowed its partner, and in 1507, Sigismund of Poland-Lithuania was 'granted' the Western part from its last Khan. The Golden Horde was no more. Muslim polities like the Khanates of Khazan, Astrakhan and Crimea remained, however.

Russian memories

Throughout the Mongol period in Russian history, relations with Western Christendom continued. In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, and despite Aleksander Nevskiy's scepticism to Western powers and to Catholicism, pope Innocent IV nonetheless forwarded a Bull to him in 1248.[56] Rome followed what was going on in the Rus' lands. Note also that Aleksander's ally, Metropolitan Kirill, established a bishopric in Saray in 1261. The church's presence in Saray secured, among other things, a channel from the Rus' clergy and princes to the Byzantine empire, which had diplomatic relations with the Golden Horde (the Byzantine emperor married off his daughter to Khan Uzbeg of the Golden Kin around 1330.)[57] The Golden Horde also received diplomatic envoys from Rome. Even in the immediate aftermath of the invasion, 'trade with the West, either from or via Novgorod and Smolensk, both of which suffered no damage from the Tatars, seems to have been relatively unaffected'.[58] Furthermore, the Golden Horde granted tax exemptions to the Hanseatic League, which continued its brisk trade with Rus' lands via Novgorod.[59] Genoese economic and political relations with the Golden Horde were particularly active.[60]

'Western Christendom' should at this time be understood as a loose system consisting of two-systems, one based on the continent, and one based on the Baltic Sea, with the density of contact between the two sub-systems being markedly lower than the density of contacts between them. The density of contacts between the two sub-systems only increased markedly during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Rus' and Muscovy contacts were overwhelmingly with Northern polities, and not with Continental ones. As already noted, by the end of the fifteenth century, we are therefore partly warranted in speaking about Muscovy as a polity which was fairly new to continental states west of Poland-Lithuania. More to the point, although prominent Russians like Aleksander Nevsky were amongst those who did most to cut off ties, Muscovy memory was that the Mongol yoke had cut off relations, and that Russians were left to fend for themselves.

[55] Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (London: Longman, 2001).
[56] Fennell, *Crisis*, p. 122, note 15.
[57] Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, p. 196.
[58] Fennell, *Crisis*, p. 89.
[59] Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 81.
[60] John Meyerdorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia. A Study of Byzantine-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

As seen from Europe, Muscovy was a bit of an unknown entity. When the Golden Horde, and also the successor polity of the Mongol empire to its east, Il-khanite Persia, converted to Islam and then, later in the fourteenth century, went through periods of internal strife, it affected the possibility for European missionaries and merchants to take the land route through these areas in order to reach destinations further East. As a result, direct contacts between the European Continent and the East suffered, and European Continental representations of the East were once again dominated by 'dreaming and speculation', as de Rachewiltz puts it. What this meant was that, when Muscovy emerged towards the end of the fifteenth century, Western rulers did not quite know what to expect.

In the standard work on early contacts between Russia and Europe, Marshall Poe rightly notes that, 'Despite the lore of a long scholarly tradition, Russia was not "discovered" by Europeans in the first quarter of the sixteenth century', when early travellers like Sigismund von Herberstein arrived, for there had been continuous contacts between the east Slavs and the political entities around the Baltic since the time of the Vikings, and there had also been more scattered contacts with the continental powers.[61] For example, Russia and Denmark formalised diplomatic contacts in 1493. Poe also stresses, however, that 'Muscovites knew little of nothing about "refined" European customs before the early sixteenth century', thus attesting to the absence of a common body of practices for official encounters. As a result, and as seen in the following example, the narrative sociabilities on either side were rather different.

In 1486, a noble knight by the name of Nikolai Poppel arrived in Moscow, carrying a letter from the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. The Holy Roman Empire came to know Muscovy as a polity separate from the Polish-Lithuanian state.[62] Upon Poppel's return to the Empire, he started to spread the word about the Russian state and about the riches and power of its ruler. Here is the official Soviet diplomatic history's version of what ensued:

In 1489, Poppel returned to Moscow, now already as the official agent of the Emperor of the Holy Roman empire. In a secret audience he suggested to Ivan III that he should petition the Emperor to confer upon him the title of king. From the point of view of Western European political thought, this would be the only means of legalising a new state and to introduce it into the common system of European states – and at the same time place it in a certain state of dependence of the empire. But in Moscow, another point of view held sway. Ivan III answered Poppel with dignity: 'By God's grace, we are the ruler of our land from the beginning, from the first of our ancestors, it has been given us by God, and as it was for our ancestors, so it is for us'.[63]

Ivan III then launched a campaign to be treated as the *equal* of the Holy Roman Emperor.[64] If we ask what made that campaign possible, I think we are warranted in answering that it was a mnemonic technique made particularly for that purpose. A memory was made that also made the insistence on equality possible. In the late 1400s, Russians themselves were far from certain about what to make of their

[61] Marshall T. Poe, *'A People Born to Slavery': Russia in Early European Ethnography, 1476–1748* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 12–3.
[62] Already in 1481, Emperor Frederick III addressed an appeal on behalf of the Germans in Livonia to Poland and Lithuania, Sweden and the Hanseatic Cities about this polity.
[63] V. A. Zorin, et al. (eds), *Istoriya diplomatii*, second ed. (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959), p. 262.
[64] Iver B. Neumann, 'Russia's Standing as a Great Power, 1492–1815', in Ted Hopf (ed.), *Russia's European Choices* (New York, NY.: Palgrave, 2008), pp. 13–24.

Mongol connection. There was a duality in the Russian knowledge production about these relations which goes to the heart of how Russo-Mongol relations are relevant to Russia's entry into the European state system. On the one hand, as has been demonstrated convincingly by Charles Halperin, Russian contemporary sources, both the chronicles paid for by princes as well as literary genres such as the *byliny*, finessed a technique of not touching on the fact of Mongol suzerainty directly. As Halperin puts it,

> The Russian 'bookmen' (writers, redactors, scribes, copyists) of the Kievan past were accustomed to explaining Russian victories and defeats in skirmishes with nomads as signs of God's pleasure or displeasure with his people. They had never been called upon, however, to rationalize absolute conquest. Instead of confronting the ideologically awkward fact of utter defeat, the bookmen finessed the fact of Mongol conquest by presenting Russo-Tatar relations as merely a continuation of Kievan relations with the steppe with no change of suzerainty involved. Thus the Russian bookmen raised the ideology of silence to a higher level and threw a veil over the intellectual implications of Mongol hegemony.[65]

However, once the Mongols seemed to be a spent force, there was a need to tell a story about Russia's history as having some kind of continuity. A solution that offered itself readily was to forge a new role for the Russian leader as being not only a great prince, but a tsar. The problem was that the term tsar, a Slavification of Caesar whose official use may be traced to Bulgaria in 913 and that is undoubtedly older, was a translation into Russian not only of the Greek term *basileus* (that is, Byzantine emperor), but also of *khan*. The implication of these eponymous translations was that these two entities were treated on a par. Note that the fall of Constantionople is at this point half a century back (in 1453). There was no longer a *basileus* in Constantinople. The hegemon to take on and preferably reduce was the khan in Saray, the capital of the Golden Horde. Vassilian, bishop of Rostov and a close advisor of Ivan III, came up with an answer to this problem, namely to raise the status of Ivan III to that of tsar and so live down the very idea that there was ever such a thing as a tsar in Saray. The link should be that of *basileus* to tsar, and the khan should be treated as nothing but an impostor.[66] As Nietzsche remarked, we are we not only by dint of what we decide to remember together, but also what we decide *not* to remember together.

Where Ivan III went for equality, the Holy Roman Emperor's narrative sociability, on the other hand, was to insist on what he considered business as usual. Contacts were also hampered by more specific cultural practices. For example, Herberstein noted that non-orthodox Christians were considered unclean, which meant that rank-and-file Muscovites had a reason to stay away from them, and that the aristocrats which did meet with them and then followed the European custom of shaking hands, ritually washed themselves after the encounter.[67]As late

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[65] Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 8, comp. p. 63.

[66] Michael Cherniavsky, 'Khan or Basileus: An Aspect of Russian Medieval Political Theory', in Michael Cherniavsky (ed.), *The Structure of Russian History* (New York, NY.: Random House, [1959] 1970), pp. 195–211.

[67] Russian borrowings from the Mongols were extensive, see Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, pp. 127–30, 222–3, 333–90; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, pp. 90–5, 149, n. 7 and, for maximalist readings, Donald G. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols. Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and 'Muscovite Adaptation of Steppe Political Institutions: A Reply to Halperin's Objections', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, New Series*, 1:2 (1998), pp. 267–97.

as the 1660s, when a number of European diplomats, soldiers and merchants had been invited to the realm, a key observer talked about their separate quarters as 'the diseased parts of the state and the body politic', and it was only during this decade that ambassadors were allowed to walk the streets of Moscow alone (Krizhanich quoted in *A People Born to Slavery*). Poe stresses that 'Nonetheless, the Russian authorities realised that diplomacy and mercantile relations with European powers were necessary'. For the next two hundred years, which is the gestation period for the European states system, Russia was a peripheral presence. Attempts at marrying into European dynasties were thwarted by cultural practices such as an unwillingness to make paintings of prospective candidates (then as now, an important item of a well-worked-out contact ad) and insistence on conversion to Orthodoxy. I think we are warranted in explaining the insistence on equality and the sticking to cultural practices in terms of memory; Muscovy was emerging from a suzerain system, and the narrative sociability that kicked in once the question of entering a new suzerain system emerged, was to avoid a subaltern position.[68]

Ingraining memories

Russia's thwarted attempts at gaining an equal standing *vis-à-vis* the continental powers in the two centuries from the end of the 15th century onwards may be read as confirming the need for such equality for the Russians. Muscovy was concurrently active in two other arenas where memories could be ingrained or changed, however. These were, first, relations with other successor states to the Golden Horde (to the east and south) and, secondly, the overlapping relations with the immediate neighbours to the west. Since experiences in these arenas could in principle give rise to counter-memories, a short examination is called for.

Let us begin with relations to the immediate west. As seen from the Russian lands, these polities were traditional opponents who had the advantage of being closer to the continental polities that was Muscovy. For example, when, in 1429, Vytautas of Lithuania called a conference in Lutsk in Volynia, the participants included the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of Poland and the representatives of the Pope, the Byzantine emperor, the King of Denmark, the Teutonic order and the voevoda of Moldavia.[69] Recall how Muscovy's rise had involved a series of trysts with Lithuania (not least in its role as ally of Moscow's key Russian rival polity, Tver'). Problems with Poland-Lithuania remained throughout the 1500s. When Ivan the terrible's son Dmitry died in 1591, and there was no other Ryurikid prince to take over, the polity was gripped by a deep legitimation crisis. The Poles rose to the occasion by repeatedly attacking Muscovy in the period 1605–1618, actually succeeding in invading Moscow in 1610. This period goes by the name of the 'Time of Troubles' in Russian historiography, where it ranks with the 'Tatar Yoke' as a particularly challenging time for what is usually, and characteristically elidingly, referred to as Russian statehood. In terms of memory politics, it may be

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[68] The alternative is to postulate a universal *animus diominandi* whereby *all* polities would aim for the top.
[69] Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, p. 296.

thought of as a coda to the 'Tatar yoke'. This one-paragraph treatment of relations with the immediate neighbours to the west should already be enough to demonstrate that these relations did nothing to change the basic Russian understanding of politics as being about emerging on top.

Where relations with the other successor states of the Golden Horde were concerned, Russia's setting up of the vassal polity of Kasimov during the latter half of the 15th century proved to be the template. Muscovy went on to annex all the Golden Horde's successor states. The ruler of Muscovy formalised the use of the title tsar in 1547. Muscovy went from dominating former Golden Horde areas to downright annexation of the Khanate of Kazan' in 1552 and the Khanate of Astrakhan in 1556.[70] The Crimean Khanate, which was the successor state most directly to perpetuate political life as it had been lived at Saray,[71] also proved the most tenacious. The Crimean Tatars burnt Moscow to the ground as late as in 1571, and kept the Russians at bay until 1783. Muscovy's gathering of the Mongol lands must, among other things, be seen as attempts to impress Muscovy's greatness on the European powers. As Andreas Kappeler writes,

Of crucial importance for the qualitative leap that led to conquest and annexation was the new self-image that the young tsar and his court began to develop at this time. It revolved around a sense of their imperial mission, and this found expression both in the tsar's coronation in 1547, and in legends that traced claims to legitimacy back to Kiev, Byzantium and even to Rome. This imperial ideology was not, as historians used to claim in the past, based on the doctrine of 'Muscovy, the third Rome' and on the idea of a t*ranslatio imperii* from Constantinople to Muscovy, but on the emphasis placed on the development of Rus itself, of the Rurikid dynasty and its successful expansion in the 'gathering of the lands of Rus'. The sense of empire was increased by the struggle for the inheritance of the empire of the Golden Horde. Possession of Kazan and Astrakhan, the seats of legitimate rulers of the Genghis Khan dynasty, who were called tsars in Russia, considerably enhanced the nimbus and the imperial pretensions of the tsar of Moscow.[72]

Kappeler's dismissal of the importance of the doctrine of 'Muscovy, the third Rome' is probably too quick, but that aside, his highlighting of the *translatio imperii* from the Mongols does, I think, strike to the heart of the matter of how Russia came to be represented by the European powers. Moscow's imperial claims were also presented in terms of diplomatic practices that definitely hailed from the Mongols, and which therefore necessarily struck European interlocutors as Asian. As summed up by Halperin,

Given the importance of Russia's relations with its oriental neighbors, it is natural that Muscovy drew upon Tatar diplomatic practices in establishing its own. Accordingly, Muscovite diplomatic protocol was essentially Asian. Rulers communicated and exchanged gifts through envoys who were supported by the host country and allowed to engage in tax-free trading to supplement their subsistence. The envoy presented himself on his knees and left his weapons outside (a serious problem for sword-bearing Western nobles). Negotiations were preceded by lengthy greetings, questions about the journey and the rulers' health, and a ceremonial meal eaten without silverware. Not all the elements of the elaborate diplomatic etiquette were uniquely Asian. Still, it was sufficiently un-European

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[70] Jaroslaw Pelenski, 'Muscovite Imperial Claims to the Kazan Khanate', *Slavic Review*, 26:4 (1967), pp. 559–76.

[71] Leo de Hartog, *Russia and the Mongol Yoke: The History of the Russian Principalities and the Golden Horde, 1221–1502* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

[72] Kappeler, *Russian Empire*, p. 26.

that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Muscovy and the Ottomans communicated with a facility neither could achieve in dealings with Europeans.[73]

There is an interesting split in representations of Muscovite rule here, for as I have tried to demonstrate above, once the domestic work of establishing the basic continuation of Russia's legitimacy as a Christian power was done, Muscovy actually started propping up its claims to being an imperial power on a par with the Holy Roman Empire by invoking its conquests of the successors states of the Golden Horde, notably Kazan' and Astrakhan.[74] It was also quick to take over other practices, such as demanding tribute from sundry neighbours. When Livonians in the West refused to pay up, Muscovy started a war against Livonia in 1558 (it ended inconclusively in 1583). The pride that Russians took in being the key successor of the Golden Horde was also evident in the sixteenth century aristocratic fashion for tracing one's ancestry back to Mongols.[75] In a situation where Europeans knew little of Mongol or even Asian ways, Russia chose to base its claims for recognition partly on its Mongol connection. This is eminently understandable given the formation of Muscovy's memory-based narrative sociability as it has been laid out in this article. It is also eminently understandable that this narrative sociability put Russia at an enormous disadvantage in its attempts at gaining recognition form European powers.

Conclusion

Eminently understandable, that is, if we take into consideration the importance of Russian memories of being part of an emerging from a suzerain system centred around the Tatar capital of Saray. These experiences and memories also underpinned a number of Russian practices which were distinctly non – Europeans, such as washing hands after shaking Catholic religiously unclean hands and refusing to eat with Catholics, meeting envoys at the border and sequestering them in special quarters, basing their foreign policy apparatus on offices (*prikazy*) that were themselves modelled on early Mongol institutions, etc. It is true that Muscovy refrained from insisting on following certain Asian practices when they met with European interlocutors. For example, although kowtowing (*bit' chelom*) was ubiquitous in Russia, as it had been at the court of the Golden Horde when Russian princes and their representatives had visited it,[76] there seem to be no recorded instances of the head of Muscovy demanding that European envoys should be made subject to it. Nonetheless, what was to become the Russian entry into the European states system was definitely characterised by a clash of narrative sociabilities, and this clash may best be brought into view by reconceptualising the entry into international society from being a question of expansion to being a relational question of the entrant going from one system to another.

[73] Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 92.
[74] As late as the seventeenth century, the *emigré* Muscovite bureaucrat Gregorii Kotoshikin explained that the ruler of Muscovy was a *tsar* 'by virtue of Ivan IV's conquest of Kazan'; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 100.
[75] Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, p. 13.
[76] Zorin, *Istoriya diplomatii*, p. 140.

The area called Rus' that the Mongol forces subdued at the end of the 1230s was a loose suzerain system of lineage-based polities characterised by a high level of conflict and open lines to allies from the adjacent steppe. I have also argued that the establishment of a Mongol imperial order centred on the Golden Horde and lasting for around 250 years meant that when Muscovy emerged as the Golden Horde's self-acknowledged successor polity, it was as a hybrid polity whose state institutions and diplomatic practices bore deep marks of its steppe heritage. Furthermore, Muscovy's emergence came among other things as a result of a century of alliance politics where the principal actors were the Golden Horde, Muscovy and Lithuania (Lithuania/Poland). The memories that emerged of all this made Muscovy seek recognition from European powers as a polity on a par with that system's key polity, namely the Holy Roman Empire. When recognition as an equal was not granted, Moscow resisted becoming part of a new suzerain system.

Since sticky memories may contribute to sustaining both an understanding of politics and specific policies that originally emerged within the context of a different system, an entrant into European international society may languish in the outer tier of international society for quite some time. I also claimed potential contemporary relevance for the analysis on this ground, and suggested that entrants may in principle never make it to the core of international society. Due to the widespread use of the racialist expression 'scratch a Russian, and the Tatar will appear' from the Napoleonic wars onwards as well as quick and unwarranted historical parallels between Russian historical experiences and Soviet policies during the Cold War whereby Stalin became Chinggis Khan, Gorbachev became tsar Mikhail etc., Russia is a particularly infelicitous case for making claims of this kind.[77] The question of in what degree Russia's contemporary standing within international society is still marked by the differing narrative sociabilities that marked Russia's entry into it, must await further investigation. So must comparisons of the Russian case with polities that entered from out of other suzerain systems. Such comparisons may be expected to yield hypotheses about how differing self-understandings of a polity's subject position in the system from which it emerged to enter international society, as well as the mnemonic techniques that have been in play to sustain these subject positions, have served as preconditions for action within international society. One possibility may be that, as long as a polity cherishes memories of a former position at the centre of a suzerain system, it will remain in the outer tier of international society. Extant studies of Chinese, Greek and Japanese entry all seem to bear out the relevance of investigating the importance of memories of subject positions in former systems for understanding today's situation. It should, after all, come as no surprise that a concept of entry international society which is relational may serve the discipline of International Relations better than a concept that is not.

[77] Neumann, *Uses of the Other*.